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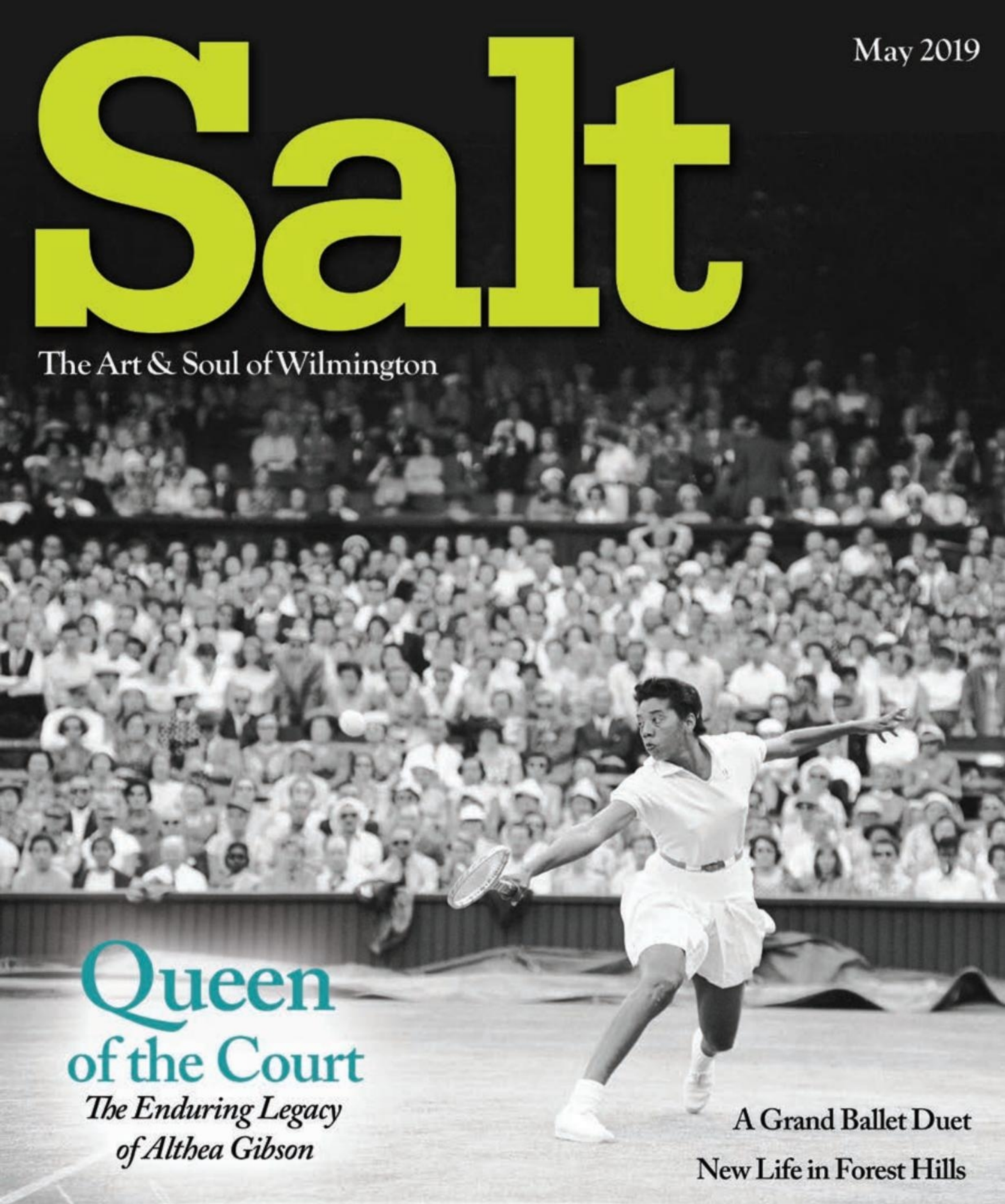

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2041 Montrose Ln • Landfall • $1,675,000

Located on two lots comprising 1.4 acres overlooking Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed marsh course with views of Howe Creek, this immaculate 5400 square feet features 4 bedrooms, 5 1/2 baths and includes first floor master with elegant, updated bath and his/her walk-in closet.

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1409 Futch Creek Road • Porters Neck • $749,000

Overlooking the soft, tranquil tidal waters of Futch Creek with a private pier, this custom-built all brick home has been thoughtfully designed to take advantage of the pie shaped lot to maximize views and privacy. The kitchen includes granite counters, double ovens, Wolfe glass cook top and Meihle dishwasher overlooks a vaulted ceiling great room and stunning sun room both offering access to the large waterfront deck.

5934 Greenville Loop Road • Greenville Loop • $999,000

Tucked discreetly down a private, wooded drive off Greenville Loop, this David Lisle designed painted brick masterpiece, includes a 20' boat slip on a community pier overlooking Hewlett's Creek. This timeless design features 4000 square feet in the main house with an additional 500 square foot apartment over the garage.

8703 Decoy Lane • Porters Neck • $514,900

Enjoy the good life in this updated, low maintenance all brick home located in the Creekside neighborhood of Porter's Neck Plantation. The open floor plan features 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths all on one floor with an additional bonus room over the two car garage.

6432 Westport Drive • Westport • $2,595,000

Incredible coastal lodge overlooking the intracoastal waterway and Wrightsville Beach featuring 4 bedrooms, 6400 sq ft., salt water pool and 30' boat slip. This one of a kind custom built house by Nick Garrett is located in sought after Shandy neighborhood off Greenville Loop Road with one of a kind views of the ICW, Bradley Creek and Wrightsville Beach

314 S. Front Street • Historic Downtown Wilmington • $999,000

One of only a handful of Wilmington Historic homes that overlook the Cape Fear River, the Philander Pearsall house was built in 1899 on a Revolutionary War encampment known as Sunset Hill. Sited at 31 feet above the river, the residence offers sweeping panoramic views from Memorial Bridge to the battle ship USS-North Carolina.

2400 Ocean Point Place • Landfall • $1,089,000

The location says it all! Stunning all brick home at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac overlooking the tranquil tidal marsh of Howe Creek and Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed ocean golf course (#5). The open floor plan features 10' ceilings 8' doors with a great room vaulted ceiling of 20'.

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1608 Dye Place • Landfall • $719,000

How about this million dollar view?! Move right in to this low maintenance brick villa featuring two or three bedrooms on the first floor (including spacious master suite) and large fourth bedroom with bath and walk-in attic above the garage. Easy, open floor plan with kitchen overlooking the great room and sun room.

405 South Carolina Avenue • Carolina Beach • $499,000

The perfect beach cottage a few blocks from the ocean! This four bedroom, 3 bath home features an open floor plan with vaulted ceilings, an expansive 30' covered porch, granite/stainless kitchen and covered parking for three cars with additional driveway parking for another six cars.

2227 Deepwood Drive • Landfall • $795,000

Overlooking the tranquil pond on Deepwood Drive, this quality built brick home features formal area as well as an open kitchen/sunroom combination, a total of five bedrooms (including the master and two others on the first floor). New updates include roof, windows, appliances, water heaters and a well for irrigation.

6201 N Bradley Overlook • Parsley Woods • $525,000

Stunning all brick home at the sought after Parsley Woods community which is only 5 minutes from Wrightsville Beach and offers water access on Bradley Creek, community pool, Tennis/Pickelball courts, clubhouse, and dock/gazebo with easy launch for kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards.

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5725 Oleander Dr., Unit B-4
Wilmington, NC 28403
Editorial · 910.833.7159
Advertising · 910.833.7158

David Woronoff, Publisher

Jim Dodson, Editor
jim@thepilot.com

Andie Stuart Rose, Art Director
andie@thepilot.com

William Irvine, Senior Editor
bill@saltmagazinenc.com

Alyssa Rocherolle, Graphic Designer

CONTRIBUTORS

Ash Alder, Harry Blair, Susan Campbell, Wiley Cash, Clyde Edgerton, Jason Frye, Nan Graham, Virginia Holman, Mark Holmberg, Sara King, D. G. Martin, Jim Moriarty, Mary Novitsky, Dana Sachs, Stephen E. Smith, Astrid Stellanova, Bill Thompson

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mallory Cash, Rick Ricozzi, Bill Ritenour, Andrew Sherman, Mark Steelman

ADVERTISING SALES

Ginny Trigg, Advertising Director
910.693.2481 · ginny@saltmagazinenc.com

Elise Mullaney, Advertising Manager
910.409.5502 · elise@saltmagazinenc.com

Courtney Barden, Advertising Representative
910.262.1882 · courtney@saltmagazinenc.com

Brad Beard, Graphic Designer
bradatthepilot@gmail.com

Darlene Stark, Circulation/Distribution Director
910.693.2488

Steve Anderson, Finance Director
910.693.2497

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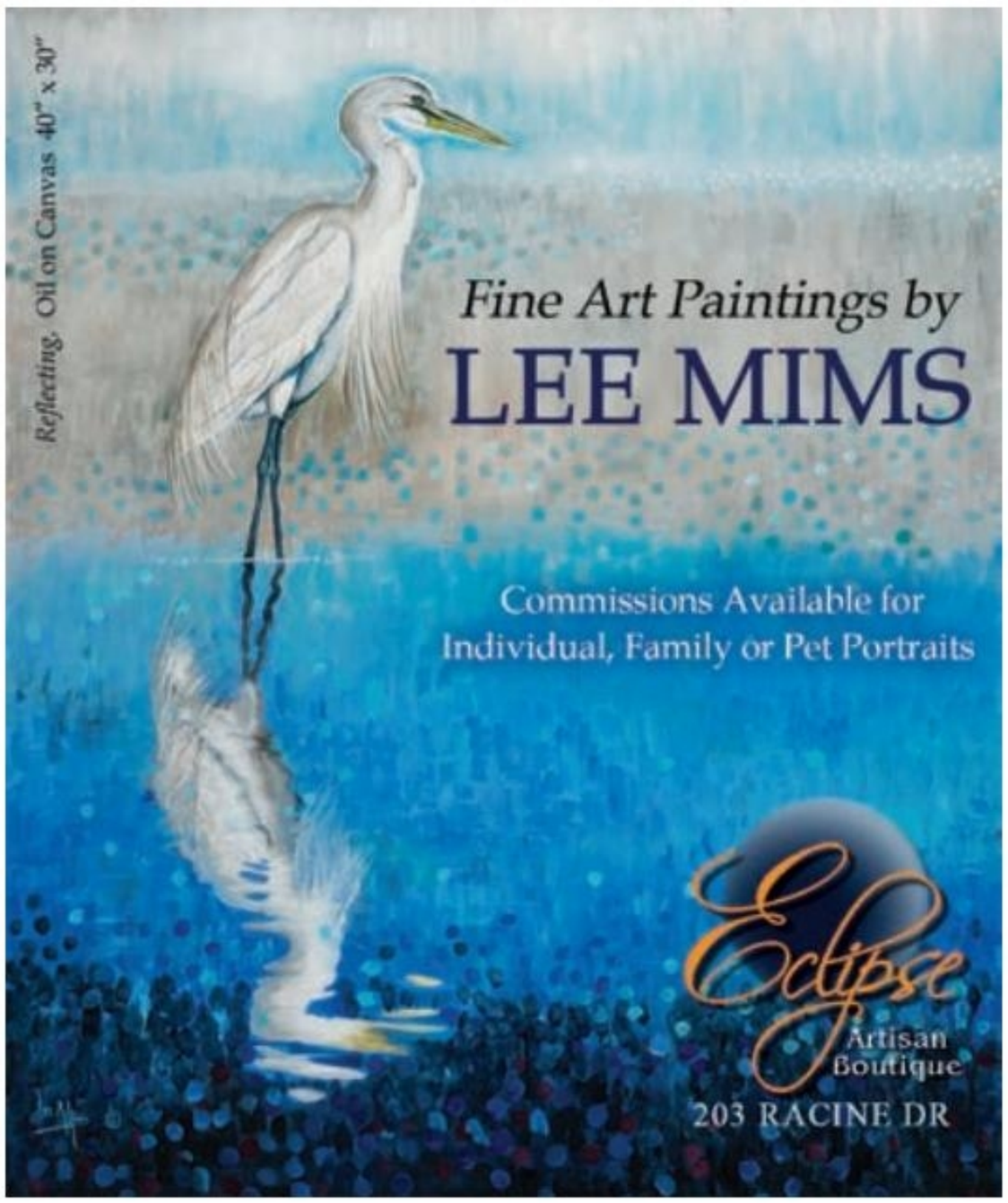

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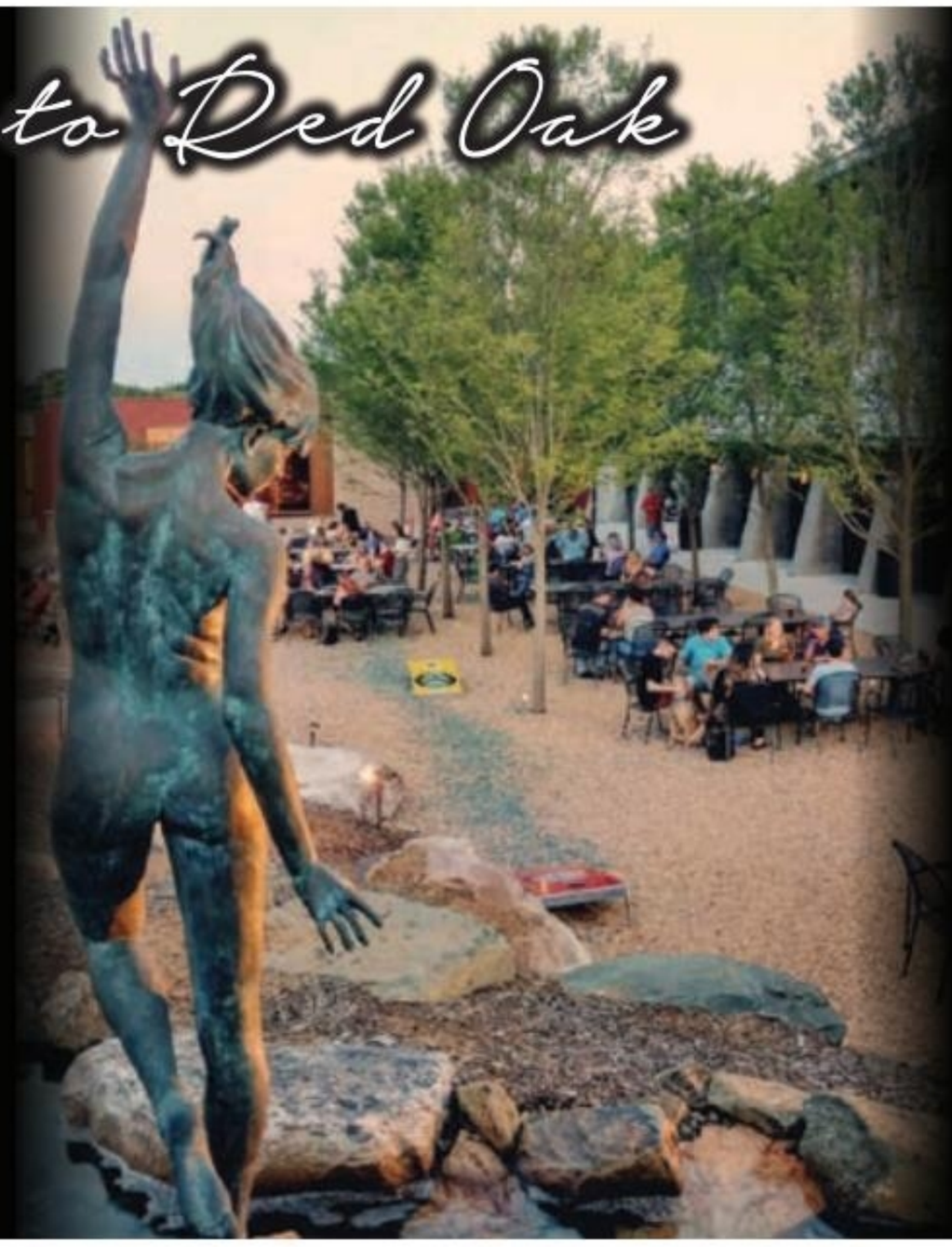

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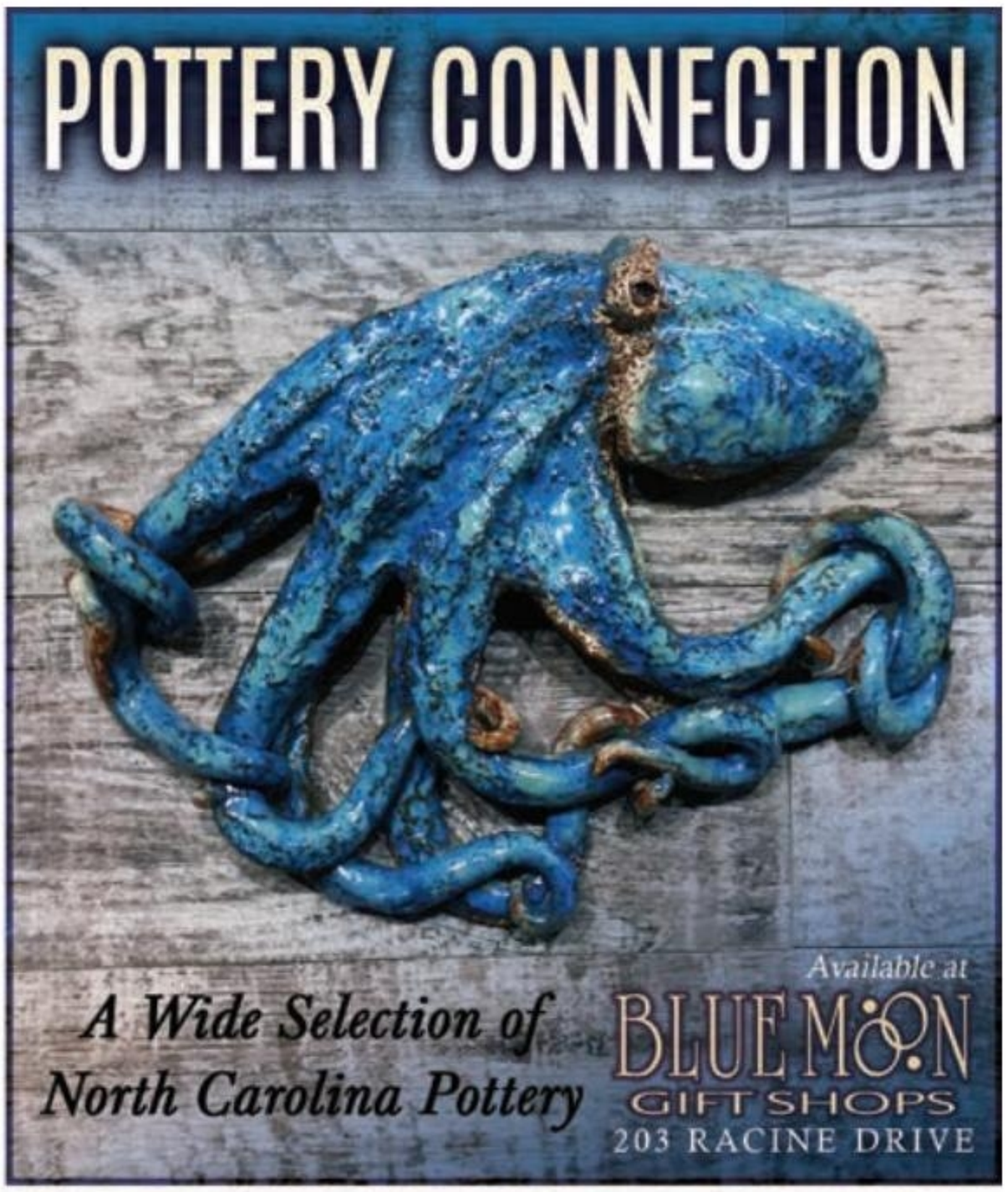
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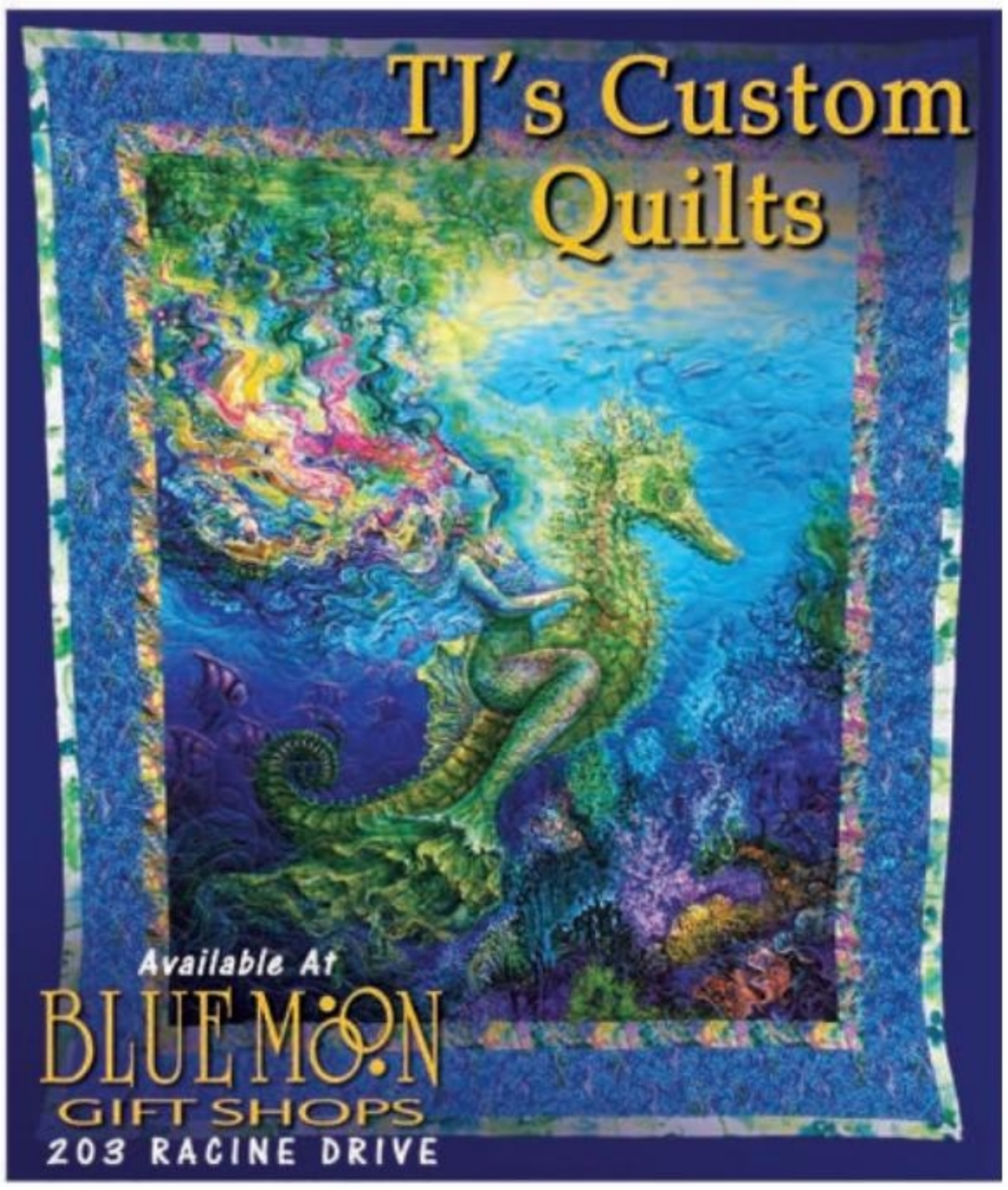
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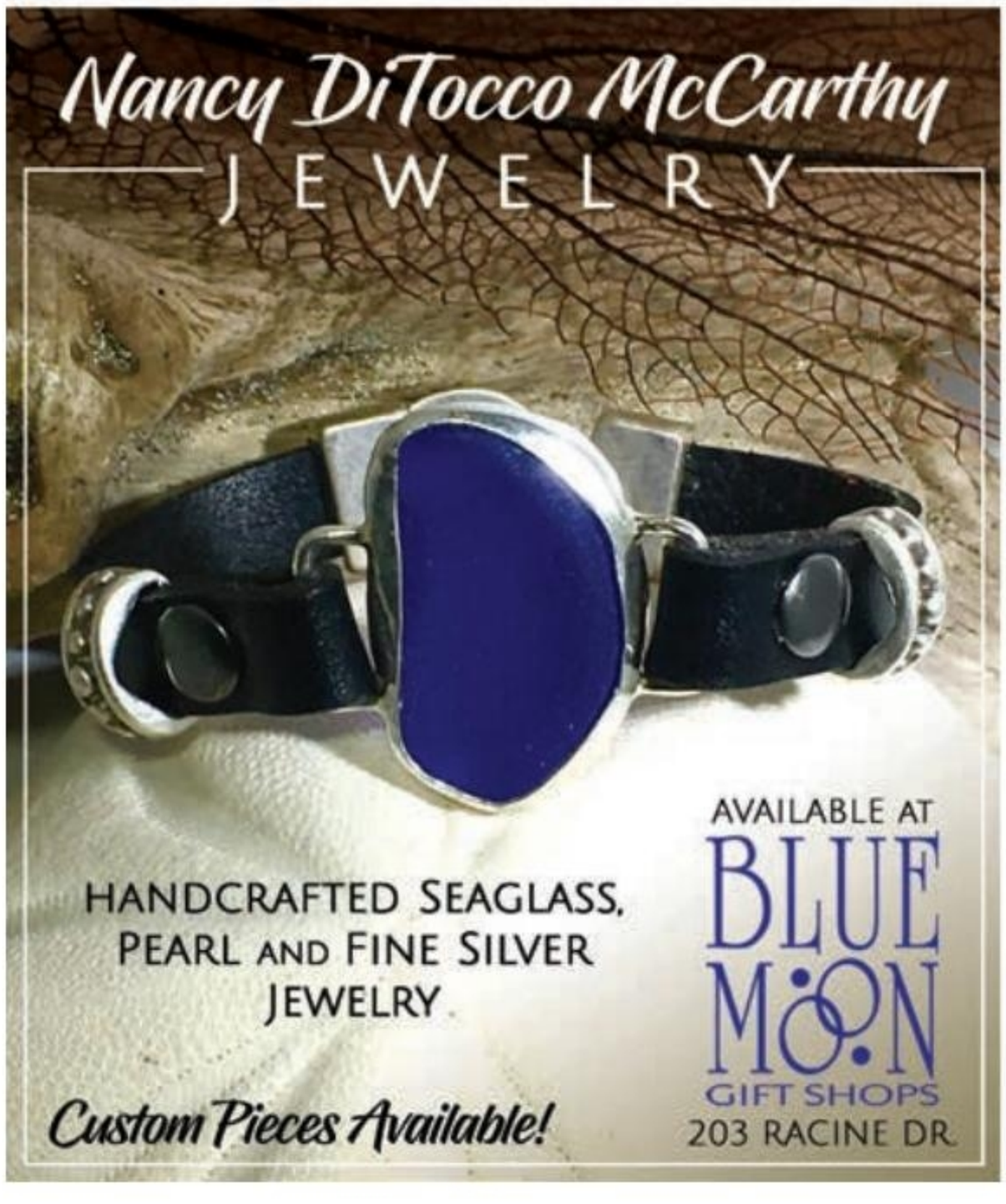
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Dirty Hands, Happy Heart

And other gifts from the universe

BY JIM DODSON

When all else fails, Mulligan the dog and I head for the garden.

Possibly because I hail from a family of Carolina farmers and rabbit tobacco preachers, digging in the dirt is not only second nature and something that draws me closer to my maker, but also serves as a cheap and effective therapy in a world that seems increasingly shaped by the insatiable gods of work and money.

For many Americans, work has become something of its own secular religion. According to Gallup, Americans average more hours of work per year than any of our fellow developed nations, yet 87 percent of U.S employees don't feel fulfilled by how they earn their living. That's a staggering problem that helps contribute to rising depression and addiction across all sectors of society.

In 1919, as *Fast Company* recently noted, 4 million Americans went on strike to demand fairer wages and a five-day work week — the beginning, historians point out, of the so-called American leisure class. As a result, weekends became enshrined in the culture. The bad news? We're losing ground to our obsession to work longer and harder with diminishing returns, the average American working a full day longer than the 40-hour work week fought for by our early 20th century ancestors.

Maybe you're one of the fortunate ones who loves what you do. I certainly am, having enjoyed a varied journalism career and book-writing life that has taken me to places I only dreamed about as a kid. Today, I own the privilege of serving as editor of four robust arts-and-culture magazines staffed by a talented crew of folks across this state. We're a merry band of storytellers and artists who love what we do and never take that gift from the gods for granted. How we spend our time away from the job says a lot about us, a lesson some of us had to learn the hard way.

At age 30, in 1983, I was the senior writer for the largest news magazine in the South, the *Sunday Magazine of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, a magazine where Margaret Mitchell once worked and the South's finest writers appeared. Over my seven years in Atlanta, covering everything from Klan rallies to presidential candidacies, I took only two or three full weeks of vacation. When I finally received the summons to Washington, D.C., for the interview I'd grown up hoping for, I felt utterly empty, burned-out, ready to find a new way of earning my daily crust.

The unexpected epiphany came following my big interview in Washington when I phoned my father from the outer office of Vice President George H. W. Bush. I'd been one of the first reporters to travel with Bush during the 1980 presidential campaign and gotten to know him fairly well — sharing a love of baseball, beer and New England.

My dad asked how the job interview went. I told him it seemed to go well, save for one small problem: I wasn't sure I wanted the job — or even to be a journalist any more.

"I have an idea," he said calmly. "Why don't you change your flight plans back to Atlanta and stop off in North Carolina?"

The next morning, he picked me up at Raleigh's airport and drove us to Pinehurst.

My Haig Ultra golf clubs were in the back seat of his car. They hadn't been touched by me in years. For at that point, almost incomprehensibly I hadn't played a full round of golf — the game I loved best — more than once or twice while living in the hometown of Bobby Jones. Instead, I'd worked myself into an early grave — or so I feared.

After our round on famed No. 2 we sat together on the porch of the Donald Ross Grill and talked over beers about what I feared might be a premature midlife crisis, or worse.

He could have laughed at my youthful angst. But he didn't. My old man was one great fellow, a former newsman and advertising executive with a poet's heart. My nickname for him was Opti the Mystic.

After listening to me pour out my tale of existential career woe, he smiled and remarked, "I wouldn't give up on journalism just yet, sport. You have a God-given talent for stringing together words and telling stories of the heart. I do, however, have a small suggestion for you. You may laugh."

"Try me," I said, desperate for any guidance from Opti.

"Perhaps you should try writing about things you love instead of things you don't."

I looked at him and laughed.

"What kinds of things?" I asked.

He shrugged and sipped his beer. He was 66 years old, the age I am today.

"Only you can answer that. Use your imagination. What do you love? You'll find the best answer there. It may sound ridiculously corny to you, but try telling the universe what you love and you may be surprised at the results. The path is never straight. But trust your gut. One thing leads to another, including people."

Humoring him, I admitted that I loved golf and being in nature but didn't know a soul in either of those worlds and couldn't imagine how I would find my way into them. Once a single-handicap golfer, as I'd proven that day at No. 2, I couldn't even break a hundred on the golf course anymore. Having grown up hiking and camping in the mountains and forests of my home state, it had been years since I'd been deep in the woods. I'd even loved mowing neihborhood lawns and working in my mom's garden, but hadn't done that in almost a decade.

Still, something got into my head. Or maybe it was my gut.

A short time later, I withdrew my name from consideration for jobs in Washington, quit my gig in Atlanta and took a 2-month writing sabbatical at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts at Sweet Briar College.

It was springtime in Virginia. I wrote for three or four hours every morning, working on a novel about a Georgia farm family for a legendary editor at Harper & Row.

In the afternoons, I took long walks through the pasturelands, fields and woods of beautiful Amherst County, Patrick Henry country.

One afternoon I helped an elderly couple down the road weed their garden and took home a stunning bunch of peonies that reminded me of my mom's garden back home in Greensboro.

The novel was a dud. My heart was never in it. But the legendary editor, pointing out that books would come when the timing was right, insisted that I call Judson Hale at *Yankee Magazine* in New Hampshire. I followed up on his advice and soon found myself working as the first Southerner and senior writer in *Yankee Magazine*'s history. I got myself a pup from a Vermont Humane Society, lived in a cottage by the Green River and taught myself to fly-fish. My heartbeat slowed. I even rediscovered my lost passion for golf on an old course where Rudyard Kipling once chased the game.

A few years after that, a story I wrote about a forgotten hero of women's golf even landed me a sweet job at *Golf Magazine* and a decade's service as the golf editor for American Express, a job that took me around the world and inspired me to take my dad back to England and Scotland where he learned to play golf as a soldier during the war. He was dying of cancer. It was our final journey. The little book I wrote about, *Final Rounds*, became a bestseller that's still in print.

Opti had been right about all of it — the power of doing what you love, listening to heart and gut while expressing your desires and gratitude to a generous universe. Whatever else may be true, I am proof that one good thing — and more important, one good person — can invariably lead to another.

Over the next two decades, I built a house on a forested hill on the coast of Maine, fathered two wonderful children and basically invested their college funds into a massive English garden in the woods. A dozen books followed, including Arnold Palmer's memoirs.

That job brought me home again thanks to a chance to teach writing at Hollins University in Virginia and simultaneously help my partners create distinctive arts-and-culture magazines that people in this state seem almost as passionate about as we are.

Today, I consciously belong to an intentionally slower world, taking time to do the work I love but never failing to spend time in the garden with my dog, Mulligan. A golf round with my childhood pal never hurts, either.

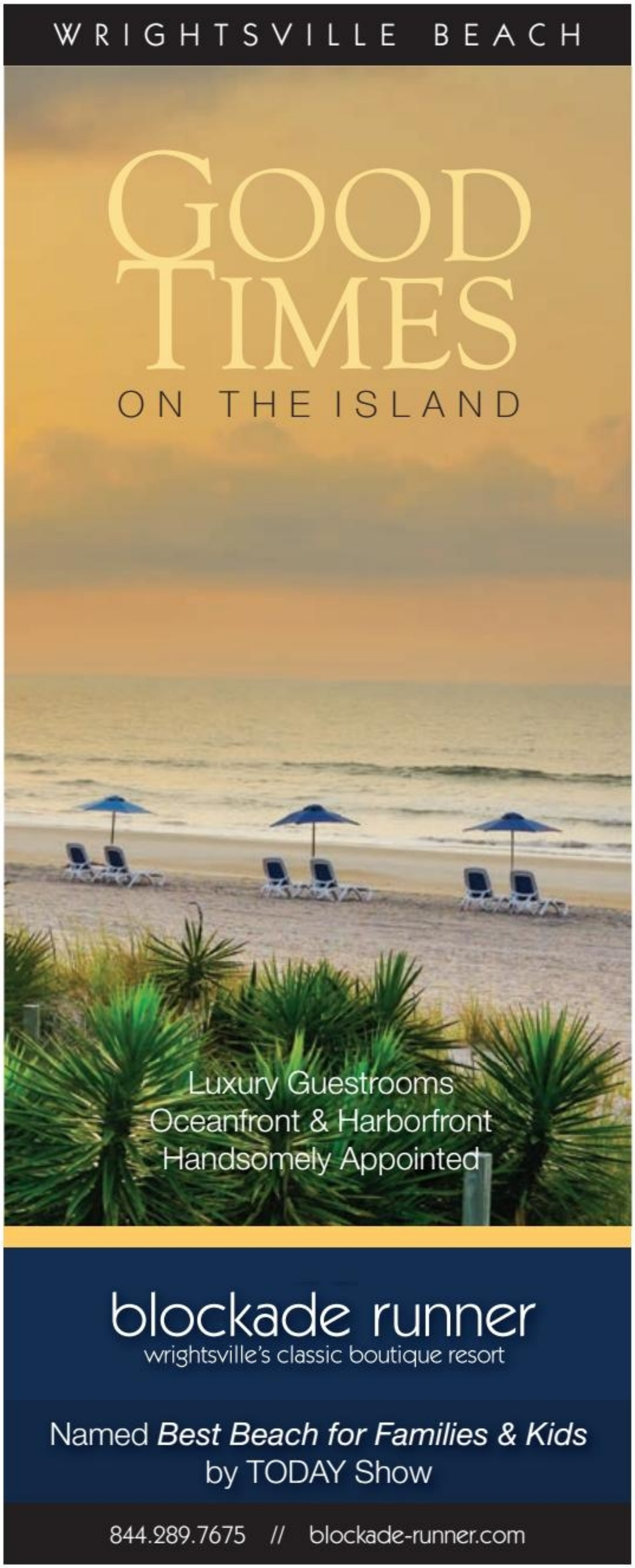
Perhaps I've just come full circle. In any case, friends tell me I'm more productive than ever. If so, that's probably because dirty hands make for a happy heart, as an aging gardener once said to me.

That aging gardener was my mom, who had a magical way with peonies and roses.

May was her favorite month, the month where spring gardens reach their glory.

Mulligan agrees with me that our roses and peonies have never looked better.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.



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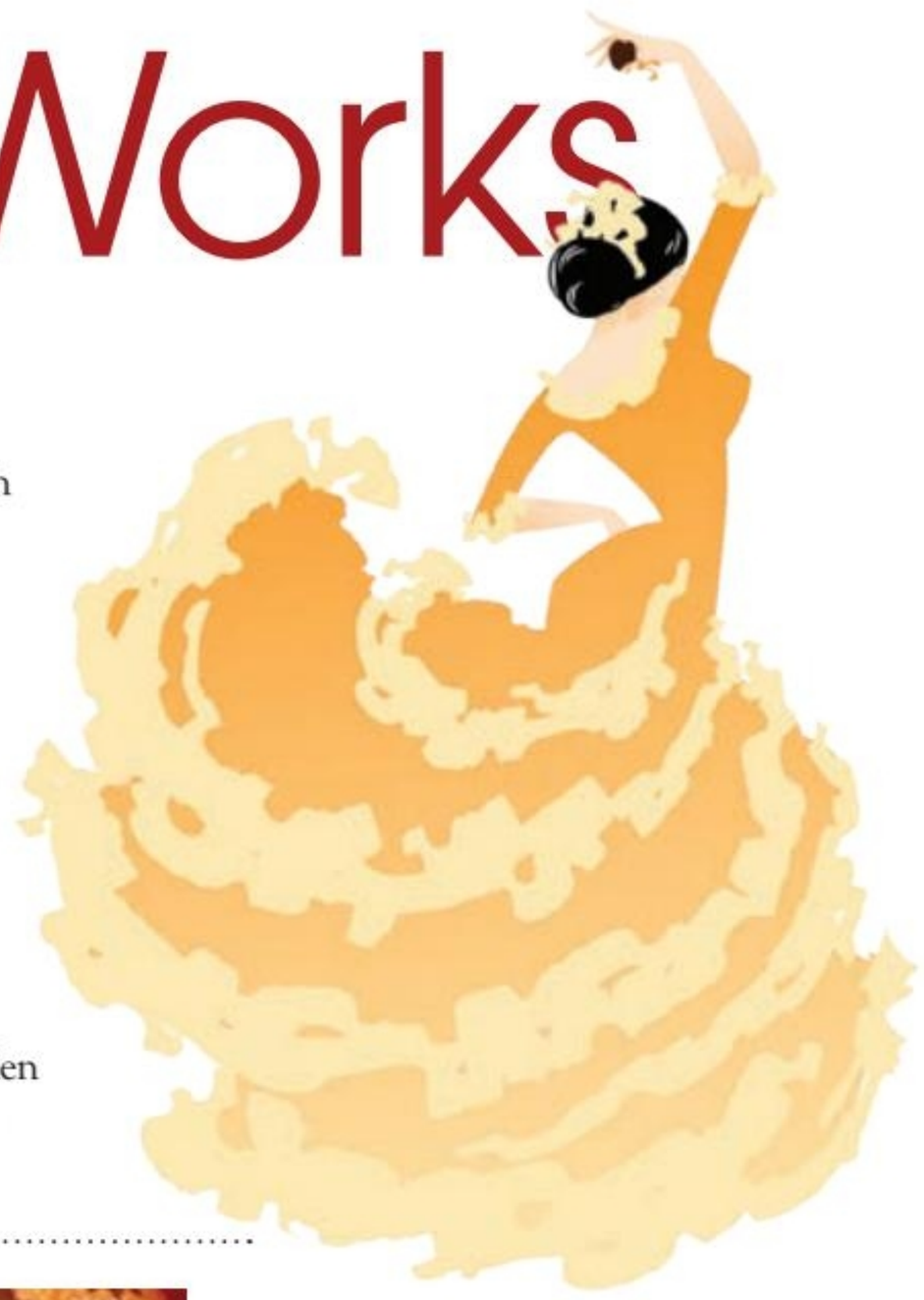
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

SaltWorks

Festival Latino

Brush up on your salsa for the 20th Annual Festival Latino, the largest Latino event in the Cape Fear region (last year's attendance: 20,000). The multicultural celebration will include authentic foods from El Salvador, Mexico, Columbia and Venezuela, as well as live entertainment, a children's soccer tournament, and a salsa dance contest. Admission: Free. May 4, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; May 5, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. For info: amigosinternacional.org.



Orange Street Art

Thalian Association Community Theatre presents the 24th annual Orange Street Arts Fest, one of the largest arts festivals in the Southeast. More than 80 artists from North and South Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee will exhibit. In addition to live entertainment there will be food offerings and a wine and beer tent. Admission: Free. May 25, 10 a.m.- 6 p.m.; May 26, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Hannah Block Historic USO/ Community Arts Center, 120 S. Second Street, Wilmington. For information: (910) 251-1788.

Mass Appeal

The Wilmington Choral Society celebrates its 68th season with two very different interpretations of the Mass at its spring concert: Franz Schubert's *Mass in G* of 1815 will feature the chorus accompanied by a chamber orchestra. *A Little Jazz Mass* composed by former King's Singer member Bob Chilcott is choir only and accompanied by a jazz trio. The Choral Society will also perform Randall Thompson's *Alleluia*. Tickets: $16-$20. May 17, 7:30 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info and tickets: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonchoralsociety.com.

An Elegant Pairing

The Wilmington Wine & Food Festival will offer a variety of culinary experiences this year, among them a two-hour riverboat luncheon cruise on the Cape Fear, a Southern Smoke BBQ cocktail party, and a tasting event with offerings from chefs at locally owned restaurants, including Manna, Pin Point, and Savorez. Sunday's party pairs local breweries, Champagne, and food trucks for a casual, wind-down luncheon. Admission: Prices vary by event. See website for details. May 16-19. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. For information and tickets: (910) 385-9463 or wilmingtonwineandfood.com.

Artful Outsiders

"Minnie, Clyde, Annie, Vollis" focuses on the work of four North Carolinians considered "outsider artists" — isolated, often untrained, and working outside the artistic mainstream. A variety of the works of Minnie Evans, Clyde Jones, Annie Hooper, and Vollis Simpson have been selected from the CAM's permanent collection, private collections, and the Gregg Museum of Art & Design in Raleigh. Not to be missed. Through September 22. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th Street, Wilmington. For info: (910) 395-5999.

From River to Sea

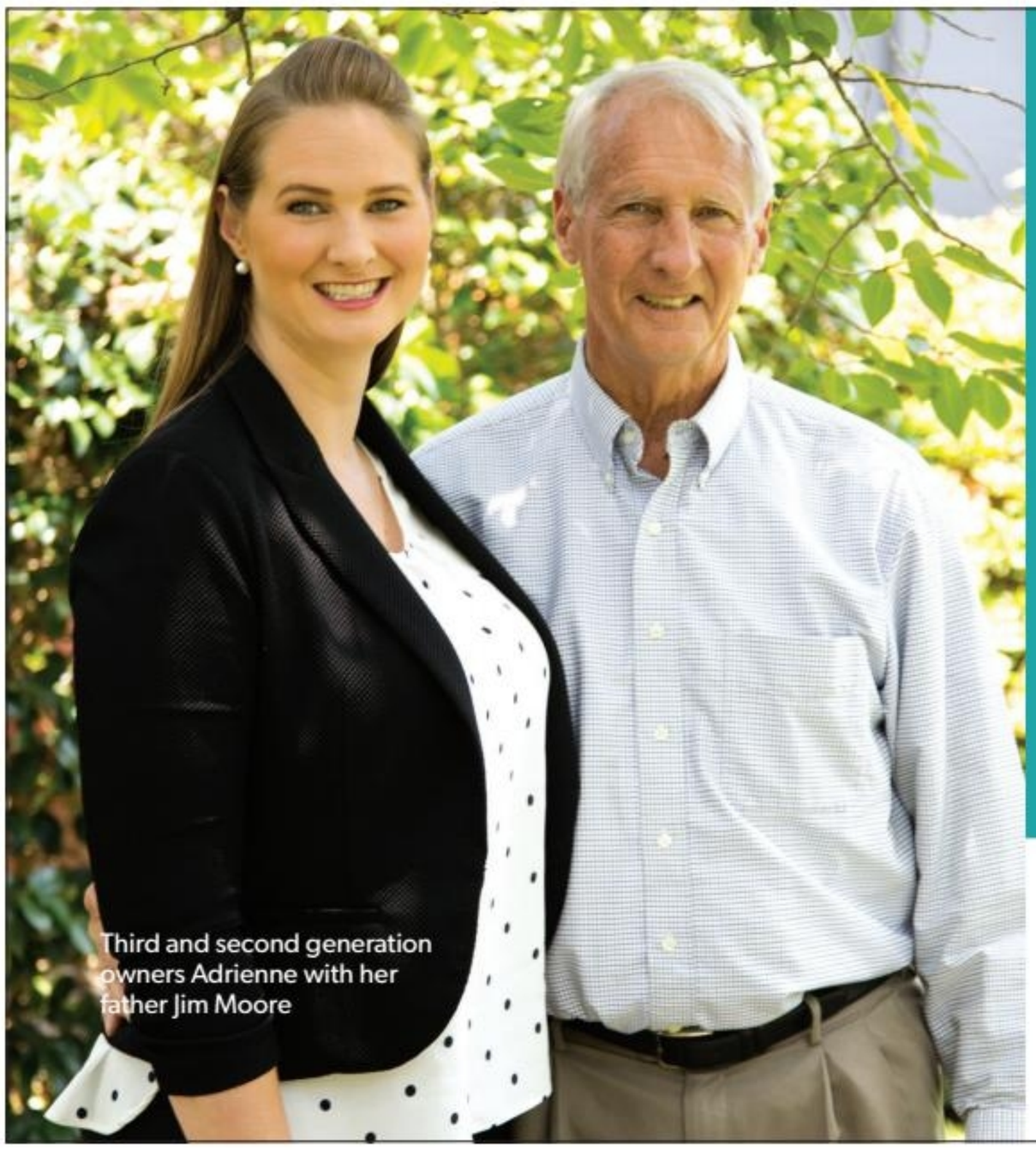
May is Bike Month, which is a good enough reason to join in the 30th Annual River to Sea Bike Ride. The 20-mile, casual-paced ride from downtown Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach and back follows the path of the River to Sea Bikeway. The trip begins at 12 North Front Street, and bike helmets are required. Admission: Free. May 4. Registration, 6 a.m.; departure, 7 a.m. 12 N. Front Street. Info and registration: wmpo/org/bike-month.

Strike a Pose

Communities in Schools works in partnership with public schools in New Hanover and Pender counties, offering programs and community resources for students in danger of dropping out. The 4th Annual Communities in Schools Fashion Show will feature summer styles for men and women — and a celebration of the Kentucky Derby, so wear your best hat. Walking the runway will be community leaders as well as CIS students and board members. There will also be a mimosa bar and silent auction. Tickets: $65. May 1, 11 a.m. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. For info: countryclubof landfall.com.

A Day on the Water

Carolina Beach State Park hosts the 4th Annual Marina Day. In addition to a display of classic boats, there will be safety demonstrations, vessel safety checks, and a display from Underwater Archaeology. Kayaks and paddleboards will be available as well as food trucks and refreshments. Admission: Free. May 11, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Carolina Beach State Park Marina, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. For info: (910) 458-8206.


Third and second generation owners Adrienne with her father Jim Moore

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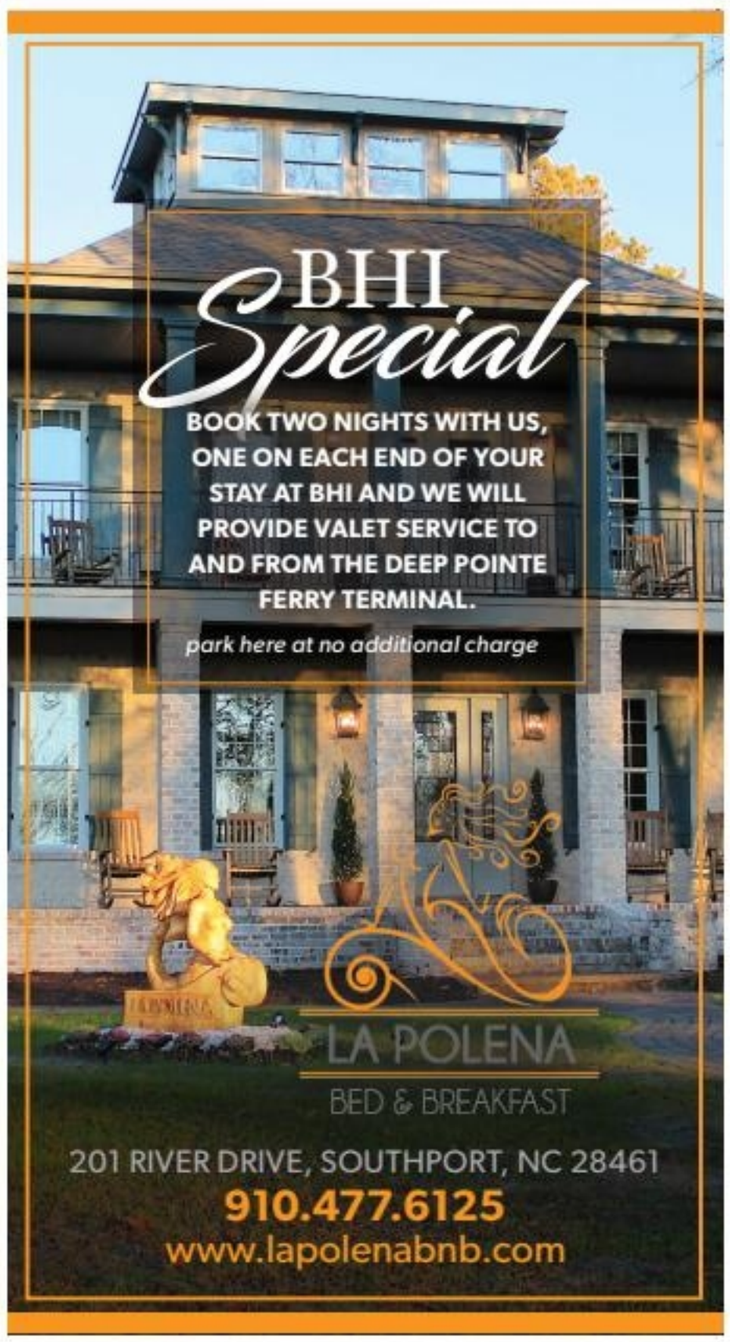
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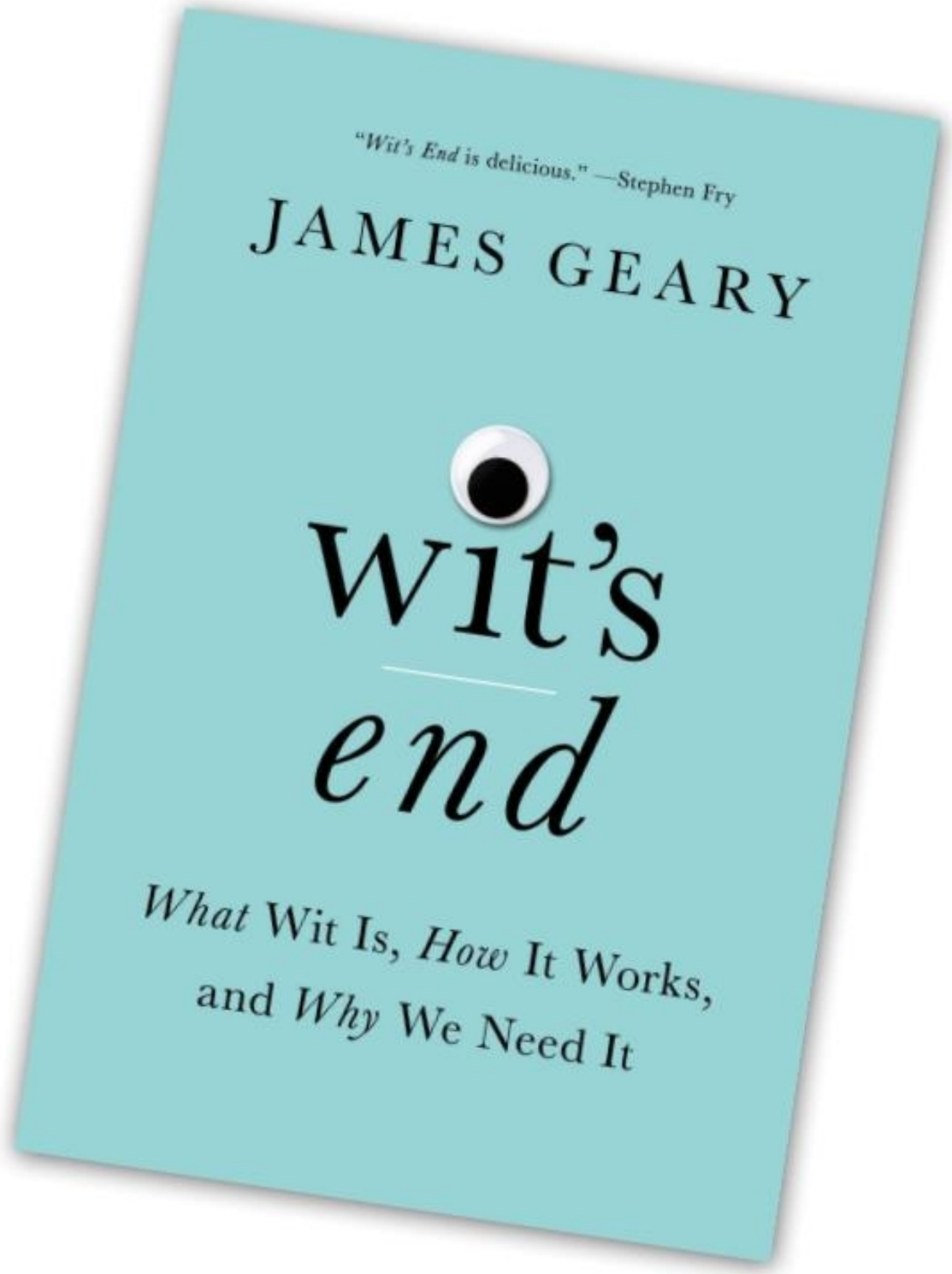
On the Lighter Side

The study of humor can be serious business



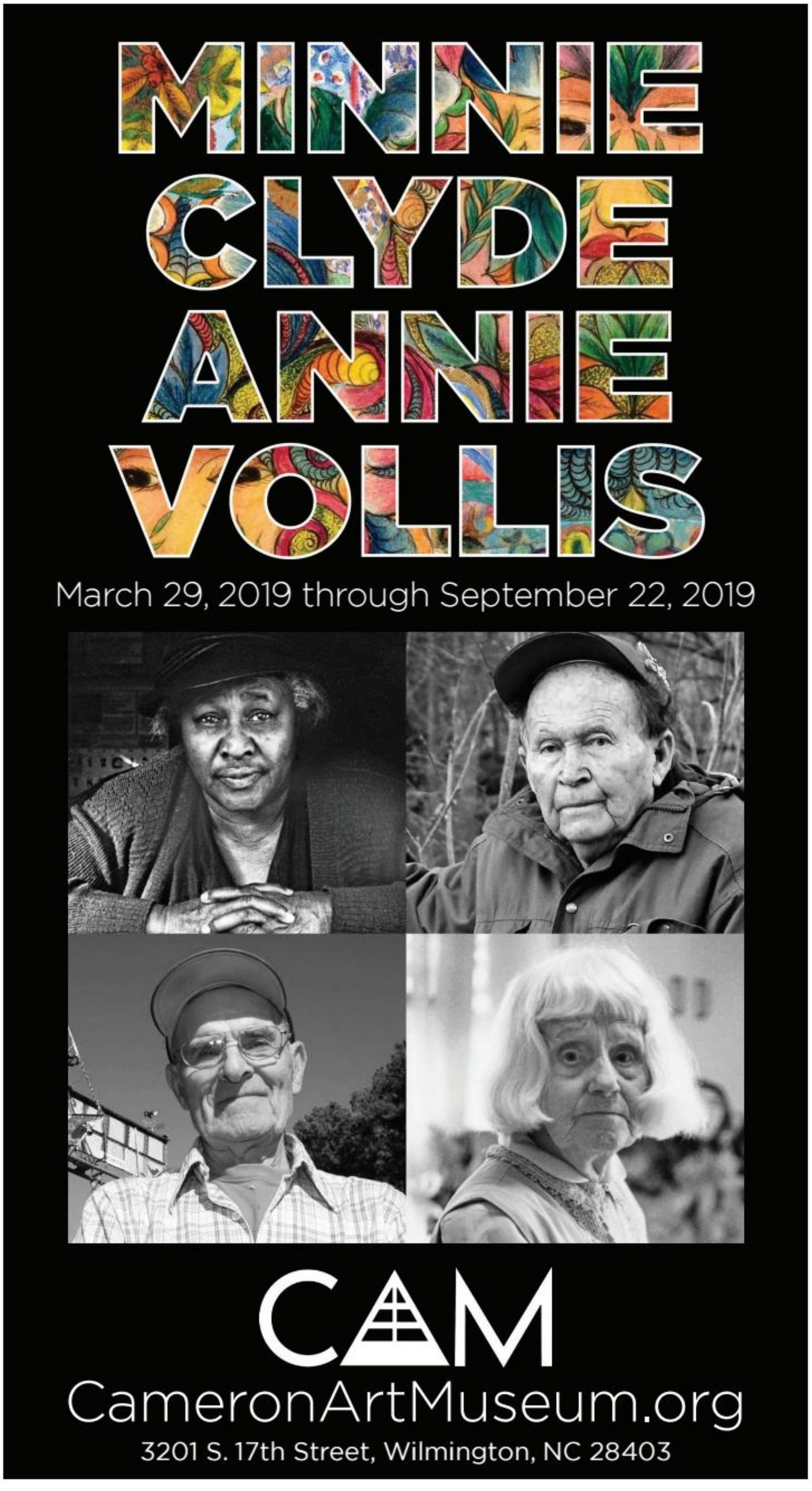
By Stephen E. Smith

"Who was Alexander the Great's father?" my 11th grade history teacher asked (this was back in the day when educators expected students to know a little something about world history). Before anyone could raise his or her hand, my friend Norman Alton, slumped in the desk beside me, blurted out his answer: "Philip's Milk of Macedonia!"

Norman wasn't the class clown. He didn't make monkey faces or squawk like a jungle bird. He was the class wit, a usually subdued presence whose occasional response to teachers' questions exhibited a startling degree of wordplay and a remarkable, if somewhat perverse, intellectual insight. *Philip's Milk of Macedonia*: Everyone laughed, even the thickheaded ones. Even the teacher.

James Geary's latest book, *Wit's End:* What *Wit Is,* How *It Works,* and Why *We Need It*, explains how Norman's agile, word-warping mind worked, analyzing the bits and pieces of intellect and psychology that conspire to make wit and its resultant humor a force in our lives. And Geary would seem to be the man for the job. He's deputy curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard and the author of *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World*, the *New York Times* best-selling *The World in a Phrase: A Brief History of the Aphorism* and *Geary's Guide to the World's Great Aphorists.*

The book opens with a dissertation on the pun. Punning is typically regarded as the lowest form of humor (make a pun and you'll elicit a chorus of groans), but it isn't a simplistic exercise; it involves two incongruent concepts connected by sound and, if it's a truly clever pun, it demonstrates a degree of insight that delights with its absurdity. "Puns straddle the happy fault where sound and sense collide," writes Geary, "where surface similarities of spelling and pronunciation meet above conflicting seams of meaning." Philip of Macedonia and Phillips' Milk of Magnesia have nothing in common except, when spliced together, an unexpected degree of silliness and a certain similarity in sound and structure.



OMNIVOROUS READER

Apparently, Geary counted the puns in Shakespeare's plays: "There are some 200 puns in *Love's Labour's Lost*, 175 in *Romeo and Juliet*, 150 in each of the Henry IV plays, and upward to 100 in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *All's Well That Ends Well*." And he offers fascinating facts aplenty: Lincoln was an avid punster. The notion that Adam and Eve chomped into an apple is a misinterpretation of the Vulgate where the adjective form of "evil" *malus*, is *malum*, which happens to be the word for apple, thus fixing the misidentification of the apple as the offending fruit. Geary also includes enough obscure puns to last a lifetime, e.g., English essayist Charles Lamb was introduced by a friend who asked him, "Promise, Lamb, not to be sheepish." Lamb replied, "I wool." Lamb went on to write an essay entitled: "That the Worst Puns are the Best." And when Groucho walked into a restaurant where his ex-wife was dining, he proved Lamb right: "Marx spots the ex." All right, you can groan now.

Geary then delves into "witty banter," couching his observations in an original faux 18th century play riddled with contemporary allusions. Using research paper format (who among us wants to read another research paper?), Geary explains how the brain reacts to wit and humor, and in a slightly more interesting chapter he explores the neurobiological mechanism of wit — the ability to hold in mind two differing ideas about the same thing at the same time — asserting that comedians who are bipolar have an advantage over their less afflicted peers. If you're an old-timer, you'll be reminded of Jonathan Winters, who gave us Maude Frickert and Elwood P. Suggins from Bellbrook, Ohio, a yokel who'd seen "some 76" flying saucers. But Geary focuses on a more derivative and annoying comedian, Robin Williams, as a prime example of a bipolar individual who could make instant disconnected connections. He also presents numerous examples of individuals who suffered bouts of unrestrained wit, such as the case of a 57-year-old man who began constantly joking, laughing, and singing. "After the patient's death, his wife discovered scores

of Groucho Marx glasses, spinning bow ties, hand buzzers, and squirting lapel flowers in their garage. An autopsy showed asymmetric frontotemporal atrophy and Pick's disease."

Neurological mechanisms notwithstanding, readers are likely to find their attention waning in chapters such as "Perfect Witty Expressions and How to Make Them" (can we be taught to be witty?), "Advanced Banter" and "An Ode to Wit," which falls with a predictable thud. In an especially cringe-worthy chapter on "jive," Geary explains "Dozens," a form of interactive insult which is "a part of African-American tradition of competitive verbal invention" in which combatants face off before a crowd and "direct aspersions at their adversary's shortcoming": Your mother is so ugly that she has to . . . " He also includes a lengthy out-of-date jive glossary — "Cat: A cool, witty person," "Chippies: Young women," "Eighty-eight (88): Piano," "Knowledge box: Brain," etc., — which is completely unnecessary.

Do we need to understand the mechanisms at work in the creation of humor? Probably not. But quick-witted people charm and amuse us; we appreciate them, crediting them, whether they deserve it or not, with a high degree of intelligence. Any understanding of how the witty mind works only deepened our appreciation of their talent. And there's much that's entertaining and informative in *Wit's End*; unfortunately, Geary's use of various literary conceits and his incessant cleverness wears thin and eventually begs the question: Is it possible to be too clever when investigating cleverness?

My old friend Norman Alton, who is by now on a first name basis with Phillips' Milk of Magnesia, knew a good quip when he'd delivered one. He didn't push it. As we all cackled, he remained silent and straight-faced, accepting our laughter as praise.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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Blood Memory

Five friends and a meal to remember

By Wiley Cash · Photographs by Mallory Cash

In his first poetry collection, 1998's *Eureka Mill*, Ron Rash writes about the connection he feels to his father, grandmother, and grandfather, especially their waking before dawn to work in textile mills. Rash refers to this connection, the connection to an ancestor's experience without the experience itself, as "blood memory."

I have always felt a kinship with Ron, and it is not just because our people come from the same places — the South Carolina Upstate and western North Carolina. I feel a deep bond with the experiences he writes about, the people he portrays, and the often disappearing landscapes he puts on the page. Is it blood that connects us? No, but when I read his work I feel like I understand Ron and the people he writes about as much as I understand my mother and father and the people who came before them.

This is what I was thinking about — this blood memory — when I left my adopted hometown of Wilmington and drove across the state, where the Appalachian Studies Association was hosting its annual conference on the campus of the University of North Carolina-Asheville. Normally, I am not someone who enjoys conferences: the academic talk, the nametag gazing, the feeling that everyone there is vying for the same thing, whether it is publication, notoriety, or the keys to both. But I felt at ease as the elevation increased and the air cooled because I knew I would be spending the weekend with writers and scholars who view the world in much the same way I do.

There were many people I was looking forward to seeing again or meeting the first time during our stay in Asheville, but I would be lying if I said I was not giddy at the thought of spending time with Lee Smith, someone I do not see as often as I would like and someone I will go to my grave believing is the most charming and warm-hearted person in all of American literature.

Along with novelist Silas House and his husband, writer Jason Howard, my wife Mallory and I had plans to have dinner with Lee in Asheville on Friday night before Saturday's conference keynote event: a discussion between Lee and Ron Rash with me serving as the moderator.

I had met Silas House a few times over the years, but I really got to know him after we spent an evening in Swain County, North Carolina, last spring, facilitating creative writing workshops and readings with groups of high school students from western North Carolina and New York City who were participating in a literary exchange program. I had

never met Jason before, but I knew his work, much of it focused on Kentucky's rich music history and environmental issues like mountaintop removal.

For dinner, the five of us met at Rhubarb in downtown Asheville. Asheville has become a culinary mecca over the past decade, and while you may hear a lot about restaurants like Cúrate and Cucina 24, Rhubarb serves consistently incredible food comprised of regional ingredients. John Fleer, a Winston-Salem native and Rhubarb's owner and chef, is the former executive chef at Blackberry Farm, and he was named one of the "Rising Stars of the 21st Century" by the James Beard Foundation. After a meal at Rhubarb that might include crispy fried hominy dusted with chili and lime alongside wood-roasted sunburst trout you can see how Fleer is steering into the 21st century with the roots of his Southern history fully intact. Rhubarb is one of my and Mallory's favorite restaurants in Asheville, and we were proud to share it with Lee, Silas and Jason.

Over dinner and drinks, I asked Silas how he had come to know Lee.

"Over 20 years ago I submitted a story to a workshop Lee was teaching at the Hindman Settlement School in Kentucky," Silas said. "And a few weeks later I went to one of Lee's book signings. I was so nervous to meet her because I loved her books, and I wanted to be in her workshop."

Lee laughed and picked up the story.

"And when you came through the line and told me your name so I could sign your book, I said, 'How funny. I just read a very good story by someone named Silas.'"

"And it changed my life," Silas said. And his life is still changing. His most recent novel, *Southernmost*, received rave reviews and kept him on a book tour for most of the spring and summer.

Over the years, Jason came to love Lee just as much as Silas does.

"I was in Washington, D.C. a few years ago," Jason said, "and suddenly I heard Lee's voice on *The Diane Rehm Show*. I dropped what I was doing and drove right to the NPR station. The receptionist asked me what I needed, and I said, 'I'm just waiting on Lee Smith to finish her interview."

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Lee burst out laughing.

"I came out of the studio, and there you were. It was like we planned it."

Before dinner, Mallory and I had discussed whether or not she should bring her camera gear, but we decided against it. We wanted to enjoy the evening talking to people we do not get to see that often. But Mallory did take one photo with her cell phone; in it, Lee, Silas, Jason and I are all squeezed onto one side of the table. If you did not know better, you might think we were family.

The next afternoon, during the conference keynote, Lee, Ron Rash, and I spent an hour or so onstage in a packed auditorium talking about Appalachian writers and literature and issues specific to the region.

"I think it's important to be able to steer students toward writing that reveals something about themselves," Lee said. "There's value in seeing your life on the page."

"Robert Morgan did that for me," Ron said. "And so did Fred Chappell's book *I Am One of You Forever*."

After our discussion, we took questions from the audience. Someone stood in the dark theater and asked if any of us have ever felt slighted because of the place we call home or how we speak.

"For me personally, that's why I don't want to ever lose my accent," Ron said, "Because that to me is a rejection of your heritage. The way I look at it is, OK, you can make fun of my accent, but we can out-write you, we can out-music you, and we can out-cook you."

I agree with Ron. I am proud of the place and the people I am from, and I am proud to share stages and dinner tables with them. They feel like family. They feel like blood.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His latest novel, The Last Ballad, *is available wherever books are sold.*

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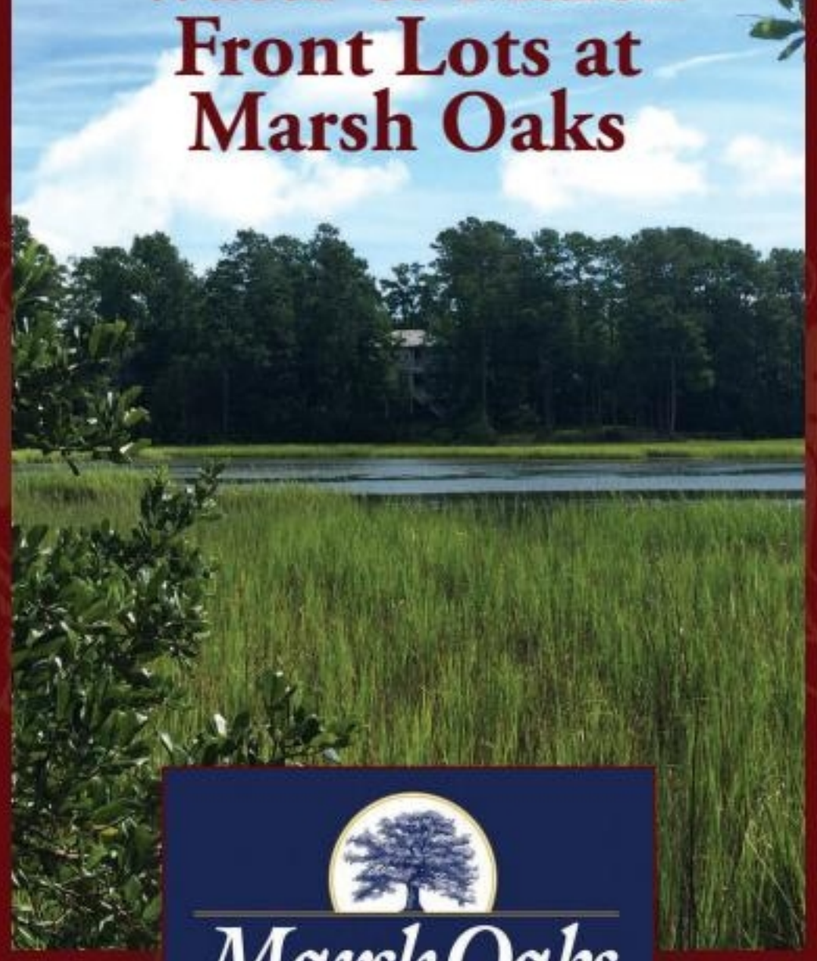

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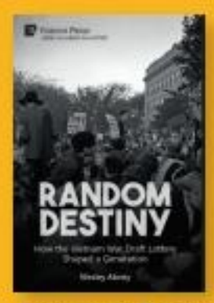

Book Review & Signing:
Author Series Part 1
"Random Destiny": *How the Vietnam War Draft Shaped a Generation*
Presented by: Wes Abney, Author/ Teacher and Ret. Attorney
Thursday, May 9th at 2:30 PM

Join us to hear actual stories of lives that were altered by the draft including not only those who were drafted, but also those who made major changes to their lives to avoid going to war....such as going to college, choosing careers with deferments, leaving the country, becoming conscientious objectors, or serving time in prison. ***RSVP: by Tuesday, May 7th.***

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Presented by: Hunter Watkins, Former Pro, Marine Park Golf Course, Brooklyn, NY & Dyker Beach Golf Course, Brooklyn, NY
Tuesday, May 14th at 2:00 PM

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Case Unclosed

In her gripping new documentary, filmmaker Jacqueline Olive explores a young man's mysterious death and terrorism in our own backyards

By Dana Sachs

Jacqueline Olive: Filmmaker

Your documentary film, *Always in Season*, won the Special Jury Prize for Moral Urgency at this year's Sundance Film Festival. How would you describe the film to people who haven't seen it?

It's a feature film that explores the scope of lynching terrorism and connects that history to racial violence today. The film interweaves three stories: the death of 17-year-old black teenager, Lennon Lacy, who was found hanging from a swing set in Bladenboro, North Carolina, in 2014; the group of re-enactors in Monroe, Georgia, who dramatize the events surrounding a quadruple lynching in 1946; and another historic lynching case, which took place in Mariana, Florida, in 1934.

What made you decide to focus on Lennon Lacy's case?

Well, the first thing is that my son was 17, Lennon's age, when I heard about it. As a mother, I couldn't imagine what Lennon's mother, Claudia, was going through. As a country, we had been living with the police killings of unarmed black and brown people. We'd been living with vigilante killings, like Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis. And it's such trauma, particularly for black people. I couldn't imagine how a mother could be facing the possibility that her son had been lynched. I had already been looking at historic lynchings. The more I talked to Claudia, the more I started to realize that there were thematic parallels to the communities where I'd already been filming.

What kinds of parallels?

For example, by the time I reached out to Claudia, she was already trying to get an FBI investigation opened. Within just a few days of his death, the police decided that Lennon committed suicide, without looking closely at the circumstances. The fact that there was very little regard for the possibility that it might have been a lynching just really concerns me, because it echoes the way historic incidents of lynching were more often than not just swept under the rug without a proper investigation. Including this case in the film has never just been about whether or not Lennon was lynched. It's about the community's right to have his case investigated thoroughly given the racial climate in Bladenboro and the history of lynching in this country.

Are you saying that if circumstances suggest lynching as a possibility, then a case like this should be more thoroughly investigated?

Absolutely. There's no reason why the family should have even had to have a conversation about that. There's a young man found hanging publicly. And the family says that he wasn't suicidal. That should be enough to trigger a proper and thorough investigation.

You grew up in Mississippi. What did you hear about lynching as a child?

For black people in the South, the stories just go so far back. For older generations, the pain and trauma of lynching — as was the case for Jews about the Holocaust — means that people don't really talk a lot about the details. So I don't remember any overt messages, but I was clear about the terrorism and about the violence. Like

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

the woods, for example. I grew up in a cul-de-sac and behind my house were woods. Mixed in with the beauty was understanding that there was terrorism that happened there.

That's one of the things I tried to layer the film with — what it feels like to live in the South. You have such contradiction. You have this friendliness, and these geographical spaces that are beautiful and alluring, and at the same moment you have these power dynamics and institutions that are de-humanizing, and this history of racial terror. It all happens at the same time. The whole point of the film is to understand the details. When you understand the details, you don't just have this vague, fuzzy notion of terror. We have clarity when we start to look at the history, and then we have clarity about what's actually going on with our communities.

Would you say that, as a filmmaker, you want to tell stories about people of color because they've been overlooked?

That's right. And also because I'm a person of color. I understand the nuance. I understand how dynamic our lives are and how cinematic they can be.

What do you mean by "dynamic" and "cinematic"?

You can often see people of color in roles that are stereotyped. That's one. And also, for example, particularly after the last presidential election, there's been a lot of conversation on the coasts, about wanting to understand life in rural areas and in the South in particular. And they often mean white people, but there are also actually a lot of people of color living in rural areas, too. Our stories are not told often enough and when they are, they're not given the same layers and the same complexity.

Why is it important to diversify the field of filmmaking?

Filmmakers of color can see the nuances more quickly. They can bring in many, many layers, consciously and unconsciously, all at the same time. The other thing that I think is really important is that we understand the American story

more fully. We see all of those avenues that most people are not encouraged to look at, like what poverty looks like, or what joy for people of color looks like. There is a standard, and a narrative, that really excludes that. As a person of color, I absolutely have to understand what mainstream society is like, and I also have to understand the margins.

You talk of "dehumanization." Where do you see that?

I'll talk about Wilmington, for example. With the Jervay Housing Project off Dawson Street, that community is designed so that people drive past it. That's not a neighborhood with streets that you can drive through in the same way that I can drive through, say, the neighborhoods at 23rd and Princess. There are few ways in unless you're very specifically going to go to that community and that means that, unless you're deliberate, you can drive past the people and miss their stories and the nuance of how they are naturally a part of Wilmington's narrative.

And what does that mean to you?

If that's how other people like to live — in an open community — why aren't streets set up that way for people who live in Jervay? These institutions are inequitable racially. It's true in housing. It's true in education — look at our public schools and the rate of segregation. But the encouraging thing is that we can change them. If we're really about doing the work of racial equality, then it's not just about programs that we set up, or who we donate to. It's about changing institutions as we interact with them. So, if your child is in a school, or you're living near a school, that you know has issues of inequity, then it's your responsibility to help make that school better. The encouraging thing is we can actually can do something to improve these institutions.

When you say "we," who do you mean?

All of us. Everyone.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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The Magic of Lake Waccamaw

Smooth paddling to marriage and mayflies and an ageless friend named John

By Amy Lyon

On a recent Sunday morning, my husband Jonathan and I mounted our bicycles onto the back of our car and drove over to Lake Waccamaw, 35 miles west of Wilmington just south of Highway 74.

It's the time of the mayfly, during which over a course of several weeks, millions of waterborne insects arise from the lake into flying adulthood. Narrow lithe things, about two inches long — half their length antennae, without mouth or stomach — they take flight and perform a courtship dance that culminates in mid-air mating. They lay their eggs on the water's surface that sink into its depths, and then the mayfly dies — all within a 24-hour period. When we reached the lake, we were greeted by a dark swarm of them. As we unpacked our bikes, dozens landed on our heads, hair, clothes and legs. We kept our lips locked when we rode or we'd inhale a mouthful. A messy business; no one paints their house during mayfly season nor tars a driveway, else they'd mummify thousands.

Lake Waccamaw is among the most beautiful and pristine of the Carolina Bay Lakes, with a surface area of almost 9,000 acres of water that mirrors the changing sky, and a 14-mile shoreline ringed by magnolias, live oaks draped with Spanish moss, and water-resistant cypress trees and their fairy-tale knobby knees. Lake Waccamaw State Park claims about a third of its shoreline and offers visitors miles of sandy walking paths through flanks of towering long-leaf pine lit by the slant of sunlight, and by small beaches, scattered with indigenous mussel shells, unique to the lake. The park culminates at a low concrete damn at the lake's southwest corner that separates the lake's open, sun-lit airiness from the start of the Waccamaw River, which meanders its way through the shadowy Green Swamp until it empties into the Atlantic at Georgetown, South Carolina. The remaining waterfront is protected by prescient zoning laws which limit the height and stature of the waterfront houses. Hurricane Florence flooded the lake, damaging many of these, and restoration work is ongoing. There are no hotels, but several houses function as inns, or if you'd rather, you can camp at the park. The lake's only restaurant, Dale's Steak and Seafood, is open for business and on a weekend night brims over with locals. They know how to serve a hearty meal, and over the years Jonathan and I have enjoyed many.

Jonathan discovered Lake Waccamaw when he was in high school in Charlotte and his Explorer Scout Troop would drive east to paddle the Waccamaw River. It was then he fell in love with the placid water, verdant canopies and the chance to glimpse great blue herons, a flock of snowy egrets, turtles lined up as if they were unpacked Russian dolls descending in size and, of course, alligators. On his many spring canoe trips, a seed was planted that one day he'd write a story about this place. Soon after college he started his research at the Lake Waccamaw Museum and while there was told that if he really wanted to know about the lake, he needed to speak to John McNeill, a pharmacist in Whiteville. John's face lit up at Jonathan's request. The long-time scoutmaster told Jonathan he would meet him at his log cabin at the lake after he finished work and he should go ahead and wait for him there, the door is never locked. Thus began their long friendship.

My first visit to Lake Waccamaw was during our courtship, when Jonathan was living in Atlanta and I in Massachusetts. For years in early spring before the swamp became impenetrable with vines, snakes and mosquitoes, we'd meet at the Wilmington airport, drive to the lake, secure canoe rentals from the state park, and spend a night with John at his cabin before heading downriver. The night before we set off we'd eat a fish dinner at Dale's as John regaled us with stories about the lake and its history, the swamp and its people, and his memorable years in the South Pacific during World War II when he commanded an LCT (Landing Craft Tank). A short man, in order to be accepted into the military, he would hang upside down, allowing the space in between his vertebrae to make up for the inch or so he needed. It worked. In between those stories, he'd catch us up on the most recent country he had visited, a lifetime tally of more than 80. Before retiring John might pull out his telescope and point out

planets and on a clear night the moons of Jupiter. The next morning he'd help us get our cars and canoes and gear over to the dam, our put-in point, and with sparkling eyes and an impish smile under a thick white head of hair, wave us off, thrilled that we'd come to his beloved lake to have an adventure.

On one of those spring mornings before we headed to the dam, in the hour before sunrise with just a soft hew of light in the eastern sky, Jonathan paddled me out onto the lake and on wobbly knees in the bobbing canoe announced, "I'm tired of you being my girlfriend, I want you to become my wife." I'm not sure who was more nervous. I had already been married once and Jonathan at 40 had never been married. On our return to shore, John was waiting at the end of his bow-shaped dock holding a foot-long piece of cypress. This piece of wood, which resembled a Scottie dog, had been dredged up from the bottom of the lake from a layer of peat that was once an ancient forest and had been a favorite of his wife's. He wanted us to have it. John and Lake Waccamaw was in large part the reason we moved to Wilmington from Massachusetts 13 years ago.

A master horticulturist, John spent the quiet winter months plotting out his dock garden, as impressive as any landlocked one — one could argue even more so given its shimmery surroundings. Come April, he'd be out planting hundreds of seedlings timed just right so they would be in full regalia for his annual July 4th party when his 200-foot dock lined with flower boxes and containers would brim over with impatiens, marigolds, jeweled petunias, red salvia, trails of sweet potato vines, miniature eggplants on which children painted faces, and my personal favorite, a tub of four-leaf clovers, enough for everyone, not just a lucky few.

On stakes in the flower boxes were wooden portraits of all the signers of the Declaration. For the ones that we don't know what they looked like, John used a face of a friend or relative. The Wilmington Police Pipe & Drums, dressed in kilts, led the procession down the dock, the bagpipe notes, proud and loud, quieting the crowd, followed by his children and grandchildren, each holding a flag from a different country; and if there were a visitor — say from the Philippines or Brazil — that flag would have a place of honor. For years during the afternoon break before an impressive night display of fireworks, a rabbi who had been a guest one July 4th would call from Israel to send his best wishes. The parade culminated with a recitation of the Declaration of Independence, by one or more of his grandchildren, to the dozens of boats that surrounded the dock and hundreds of us on it. After which we'd feast on hot dogs and beans and a birthday cake for America. We used to call it John's birthday, although his actual one was in September. Two years ago, John died just after turning 98.

John loved the mayflies. He delighted in their invasion, explained the more robust their numbers, the healthier the lake's ecosystem. Evidently this is an extremely healthy year. John would have been pleased and he'd have an easy answer for the astonished initiate who, upon experiencing this phenomenon would say, "But that's so sad! To live only one day?" To which John would reply, "But that one day is at Lake Waccamaw, you can't get any luckier than that."

Amy Lyon lives and writes in downtown Wilmington.

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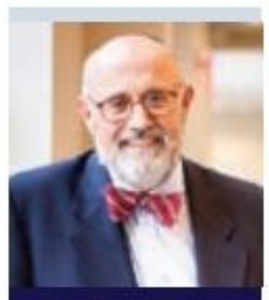
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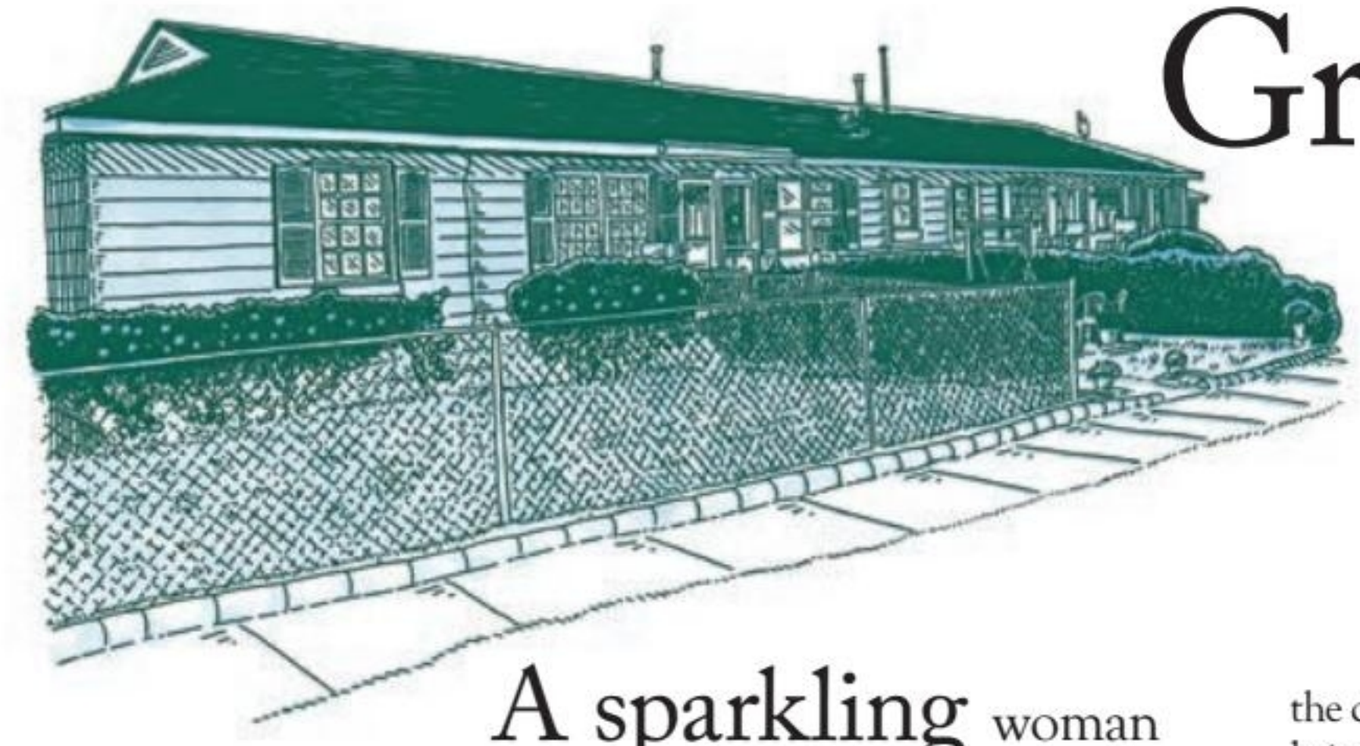

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

A sparkling woman of a certain age surprised me a bit as I, Lord Wilmington, waited in the appliance section in the Lowe's on Carolina Beach Road recently.

It's not just that she came up to my waist. Being a willowy 6 foot, 8 inches tall with hair artfully arranged on top, I had long ago grown accustomed to towering over my subjects. Indeed, my height, my solemn bearing and, ahem, my beauty, contributed mightily to my becoming Speaker of England's newly formed House of Commons and later, in 1742, its second Prime Minister.

It wasn't just the woman's energy and the flash of her eyes behind her glasses that caught my full attention. It was her statement that she herself—after winning a battle with lung cancer — had gutted her new house, which she had bought in a lottery for $11,000 near Greenfield Lake.

Excuse me? This diminutive woman, ripping walls down while recovering from cancer? It's only been a recent development that yours truly, Spencer Compton, could swing a hammer with more force than the gavel I occasionally and reluctantly used in Parliament.

And really, Madam, $11,000 for a home by that beautiful lake? And in a lottery?

As I have stated in previous missives for this grand publication, I have a great curiosity for this river city named for me. I have marveled at the variety of neighborhoods and their differing architecture. And I have savored their histories like the port I would sip each eve at London's storied Kit-Cat Club. (That's where my portrait was painted, a copy of which resides in your City Hall.)

I have discovered the uncanny Mill Village neighborhood off Wrightsville Avenue and met many of its longtime residents. I have walked the blended Carolina Place section, where the Whigs of my day (today's liberals) would live. I have dined with new friends in the Sunset Park development, which was originally designed to house the city's grandest mansions until the Second World War erupted, bringing a sudden need for inexpensive bungalows for ship-builders at the neighboring port.

I have sauntered the beautiful streets and alleys of Forest Hills and even received an invitation inside the walled enclave that is Landfall (once my elegant stature became known about town).

Yes, I have also wandered the area above my residence at 4th and Queen Street, trying to unlock the persistent and bloody mystery of why most of Wilmington's murders happen within a few blocks of 10th and Castle streets. (I shall share my findings in an upcoming report.)

And I have found and fallen in love with Greenfield Lake, which I discovered had its genesis when I was House Speaker across the pond and my beloved protégé, Gabriel Johnston, was capably governing this colony for the crown, which he named Wilmington in 1739. Back then, it was a swampy series of creeks where Dr. Samuel Green had his rice plantation. A spillway and a millrace would later transform it into one of our city's best-loved and oft-used features.

The tousled woman in a grey sweatshirt explained that she had won the right to buy one of those rectangular, military-style homes made of cement block that adorn the northern and eastern wooded shoulders of Greenfield Lake Park like crude but sturdy jewelry. Ah-ha! My manicured eyebrows twitched with interest. I had wondered about those rugged houses and the people in them during previous walks and rides on the five-mile track around the lake. I had rightly assumed they were government-built, but wrongly believed (as it turns out) they were for port workers during the war and still belonged to the government. I had also heard it is gloriously inexpensive to live there, and that there is a lengthy waiting list of people wishing to do so.

My bubbly new friend could only briefly explain about the lottery system before being whisked away to the refrigerator section by a Lowe's worker. My curiosity stimulated, I mounted my landlord's trusty Harley-Davidson motorcycle and rumbled off to investigate. What I found is said to be the last remaining housing co-operative of

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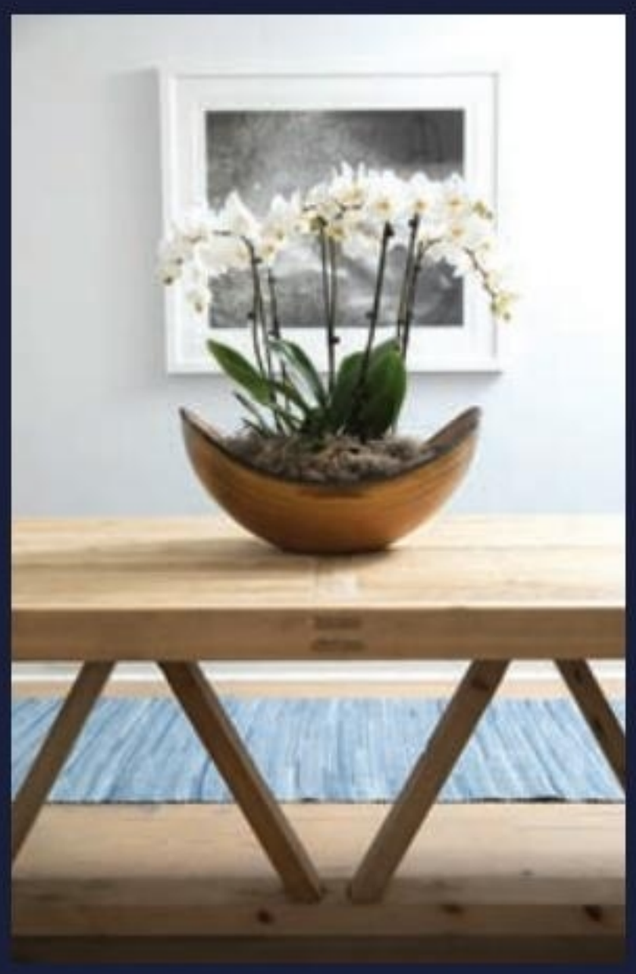

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"It's the best-kept secret in Wilmington," said Lydia Horne, manager of the 90-acre, nonprofit Lake Forest development. The defense department built the 584 units starting in 1940, she told me. Some could barely house my previous slipper collection. The one-bedroom units have just 435 square feet of living space, the two-bedroom units swell to 596 square feet and three-bedrooms have 741 square feet. But many of these duplexes have been combined over the years for double or even triple the space. I learned that the development is divided between the Lake Forest Parkway side of the lake (originally for officers) and the Pinecrest Parkway portion (historically for enlisted families).

City records I perused at the main library indicate it was part of a wartime home-building boom here that began in the late 1930s under the guidance of the newly minted Wilmington Housing Authority to deal with a surge of new residents that would nearly quadruple Wilmington's population by the end of the war. I find this fascinating. While some in Parliament believed I was just a powdered and perfumed fop, it's the attention to these kinds of details that made me indispensable to both King Georges I and II. Imagine all the colonies England had around the world when Dr. Green was growing his rice here, and all the complexities of running them at some semblance of a profit. From my childhood at our family's moated Compton Wynyates estate, I had an easy gift for the realities of the realm.

I learned the non-profit Veterans Homes used the 584-unit development (and similar ones across the nation that later failed) to inexpensively house veterans returning from the war, a benevolent practice that suits my Whig sentiments down to the ground. Lake Forest Inc. took it over in 1957, Madam Horne explained. The co-op owns the actual structure of each home — the walls and roof — and is responsible for exterior painting, shingling, repairing soffit and fascia, etc. (All things this dedicated follower of fashion has learned to do since Hurricane Florence.) But the home belongs to you for your lifetime and that of your descendants, if they want it. Or you can sell it.

Hence the lottery. Veterans still get top preference, but anyone can call in on the first Monday of the month and get in the next day's lottery, if there are houses available. They typically sell for between $5,000 and $15,000. Those with criminal records or bad credit need not apply, explained office assistant Tiffany Whitaker, who was busily answering the phone on this first Monday. "No, we're not going to do the lottery tomorrow," she told a caller. "Call back Monday, May the 6th."

Between calls she told me you can do whatever you want to the inside, from gutting it like my friend at Lowe's did or just repainting or rearranging.

Monthly maintenance fees run a little under or over $200 a month, depending on unit size. That and utilities are typically all it costs to live there once you've bought in or inherited.

"Would you like to see my house?" asked 73-year-old Sandra Cayton, a Lake Forest board member who also comes up to my still-sleek waist. This nimble woman had just finished vacuuming the development's 2,000-square-foot auditorium, which has seen countless meetings, dances and weddings in its nearly 80-year-old history. "Are you riding a motorcycle?" she asked. "Jump in my car. I think you'll fit." Her car turned out to be one of those thundering Dodge Challengers, as black and silky as a raven's wing. "It's got plenty of get up and go," she said, pushing the starter. I could feel the rumble in my liver and, as a new and happy Harley rider, I complimented her on it. "It wasn't loud enough when I bought it," she said. "So I took it to the muffler shop."

A few blocks away she pulled into the covered parking area of an immaculate three-bedroom duplex that she and her husband turned into one big home.

"We knocked down every wall, all the ceilings," she said. They raised four girls here, and she cared for her husband, a well driller, until he died last year from Lou Gehrig's disease. The living room is as vast and nicely appointed as the one I saw at Landfall. "Check out this bathroom," she said. It's a huge, beautifully tiled affair with a walk-in shower big enough for me and a rather towering potted plant. My family's castle would be honored by such a bath. Her home even has a separate room for a tanning bed and the ground-water heating and cool-

ing system her husband lovingly installed.

We visited on her couch and talked about her husband and their secure, happy life here. Her seal point Himalayan cat Cassie deigned to lounge royally upon my lap as we chatted. "Everybody looks out for everybody," she said after offering refreshments. What if someone gets in their cups and disturbs order, or starts collecting cars without wheels? "You go in front of the board," she replied briskly. I recalled she is on the board and doesn't mind vacuuming an entire auditorium by herself. "Two strikes and you're out."

That's why you'll find order and quiet if you roam the neighborhoods as I did, slowly motoring and frequently stopping. I discovered many owners have built additions, porches. garages and outbuildings. As I looped around the lake, I had to stop at a cluster of these domiciles overlooking a sweet stretch of water and the lake's most picturesque walk bridge. I found it to be one of Wilmington's nicest views, in contention with some of downtown's most prime real estate overlooking the mighty Cape Fear.

One of these crown jewels belongs to 73-year-old Phillip Jones and his wife of 54 years (and high-school sweetheart), the elegantly named Troy. She grew up in the house, which belonged to her mother and Army-veteran father. "We moved here when I was eight years old" from a smaller unit in the neighborhood, she told me.

"We dated here," Phillip said while we relaxed in the front yard by the gazebo he added. "We parked in the back by the cutout." He had spent his infancy in Sunset Park, but grew up by the lake within sight of his future wife.

"I've been fishing here for 65 years," Phillip, a fellow motorcyclist, said as we soaked up the azalea-framed view of Dr. Green's masterpiece. As youngsters, he said, they swam in the lake by the spillway, which had a white sand beach and a lifeguard. There was a children's zoo and a red train for riding. As he reminisced, neighborhood children cavorted and bicycled past, each respectfully addressing my host as "Mr. Jones." He is a man of some skill. He was in the Navy and became an instrumentation specialist for General Electric.

He's also the pastor for the Born Again Baptist Church in Snead's Ferry, where the couple lived until after Troy's mom moved out of the old block homeplace 20 years ago.

Phillip completely gutted it before moving in. "There was nothing left but a hole in the floor where the commode was," he said. When he rebuilt it, he designed it around the furniture they cherished. It's an uncanny place that you can circle around inside, with angled walls and interesting recesses, including one with a jacuzzi in the large bathroom.

The yard is lovingly tended and there's a large chunk of manicured parkland in their front yard. "I tell everybody I've got seven acres in front taken care of by somebody else," Phillip said. "We're living pretty good." I heartily agreed.

Rumbling slowly away, I gave thanks for finding another vibrant and unusual piece of the fabric of this city, and for the new friends who live there. I hope you find Wilmington and its history as savory as I do, even if it's not named after you. — *Spencer Compton*

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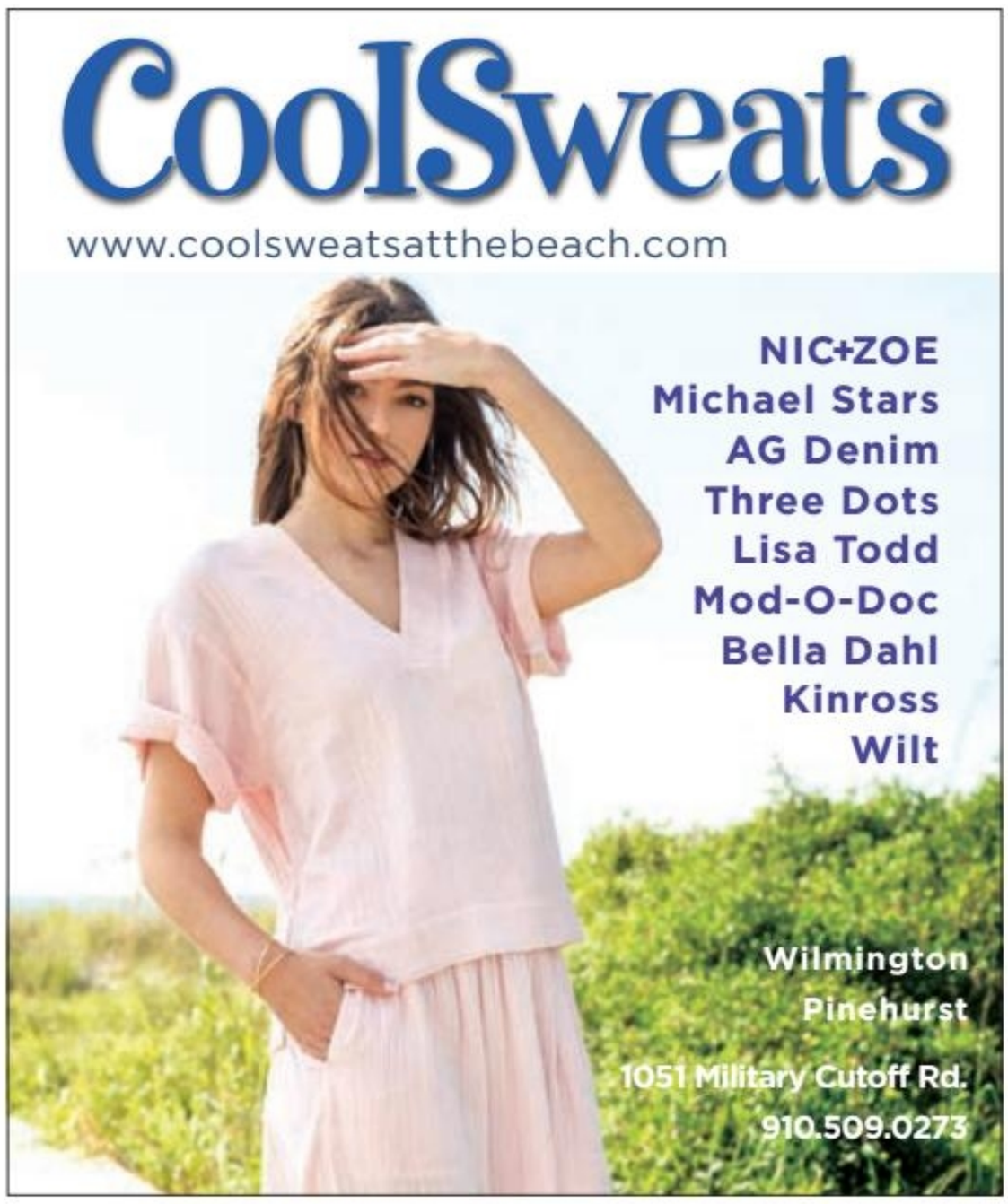

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Glossy Ibis

A social wader of flooded fields and coastal marshlands

By Susan Campbell

Late spring is the time when wading birds abound along our coastline. Most are leading young of the year from breeding colonies. We have species that nest around ponds and marshes and dredge some on forested islands. Unlike the gulls, terns and shorebirds, they require vegetation for raising a family: it may only be short, shrubby growth. For these birds, a scrape in the sand just will not do.

One of the more striking long-legged birds that we find along the southeastern coast at this time of year is the glossy ibis. Like its cousin the white ibis, the bill is long with a downward curve. These birds get their name from the iridescent dark plumage typical of adult birds. At a distance they appear jet black, but upon closer inspection the feathers are shiny and depending on the intensity and direction of the light, they have anything from a pinkish or maroon to a violet tint. The legs and bill are a dull gray and the eye is a dark brown. Individuals in winter should be scrutinized since dark ibis seen here may be white-faced ibis, a rare cool season visitor from the western U.S. White-faced may not have white faces in the winter, but they will have pinkish legs, bright pink eyes and facial skin. One can really only know for sure at close range or by using powerful optics. However, separating young white ibis, that have mostly dirty brown feathering their first year, is less tricky.

Glossies are rarely seen alone, preferring to associate in flocks as they forage in wet areas. The birds are not choosy, and so may be found in anything from flooded agricultural fields to marshes and estuaries. Favorite foods include frogs, crayfish, small crabs, worms, insect larvae and even seeds. These birds are adaptable, being excellent foragers by sight or by feel. They may chase moving prey but are effective at feeling out food items with their sensitive bills. Typical feeding strategy involves a slow-moving line of closely packed ibises systematically probing a wet area and swallowing any item small enough to swallow. This behavior often draws the attention of other waders like great and/or snowy egrets who will snap up fish and other creatures attempting to evade the ibis. Glossies can frequently be seen in tidal areas actively probing as the tide is falling and exposing an abundance of prey.

Glossy ibises are almost always found nesting among other species as well. A large rookery with many sets of eyes on the lookout for danger is preferable. Both parents construct a bulky nest of sticks, twigs and/or reeds in the branches of a small tree or stout shrub. Incubation of three or four eggs commences once the last egg is laid. Although it is three weeks before the young hatch, they remain in the nest for fewer than ten days. The fledglings will follow their parents around in a protected area for another few weeks until they are capable of sustained flight. But the family will still remain together well into the winter as the young birds continue to learn the skills they need for survival.

At times, glossy ibises may be mistaken for double-crested cormorants in our area, where both species are common. Flocks tend to fly together in a similar V-shaped pattern, although they spend more time gliding than the bulkier cormorants. Also glossies will sunbathe on cooler days, spreading their wings outward to dry and warm the way cormorants do regularly. So keep a keen eye out for larger, dark birds if you are in wet habitat — spotting a glossy ibis is a real treat.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted at susan@ncaves.com.

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their petals a delicate
shade of pink. But
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feathers is stark
in early spring,
against umber,
sienna, and olive,
and the evening air,
cool and weightless
here, where egrets
come and go — like
darkness and the light.

– Terri Kirby Erickson

QUEEN OF THE COURT

Althea Gibson fought discrimination to become America's first African-American tennis legend

By Kevin Maurer

Wimbledon's Centre Court was sweltering as Althea Gibson stared across the net at Darlene Hard. It was 1957 and Gibson was on the verge of winning one of tennis's most prestigious tournaments. As she faced off against Hard, the match was for more than the tournament's singles crown. Gibson was on the verge of shattering tennis's 80-year color barrier. Until then, blacks were only at tennis clubs to work.

Now, one of their own was on the verge of being a champion, thanks to help from a Wilmington doctor who mentored and coached Gibson to a championship — first on the clay courts of the French Open a year before — and now on the grass courts of Wimbledon.

Seeded number one, Gibson cut through her competition with an aggressive — described as "masculine" — style of tennis. The 5-foot, 11-inch Gibson could cover the court and kept the pressure on her opponent with thundering serves and volleys. Gibson described her own playing style as "aggressive, dynamic — and mean." In front of 17,000 spectators, including Queen Elizabeth, Gibson routed Hard in 50 minutes in straight sets — 6-3, 6-2. Fans at Centre Court "raised only an apathetic cheer when the Queen presented her with a big gold salver and Darlene hugged her with sisterly enthusiasm," according to a *Sports Illustrated* story written in 1957.

It didn't seem to phase Gibson. Being champion was all that mattered.

"Who could have imagined? Who could have thought?" said Gibson during a 1988 ceremony at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

1958 Wimbledon Championships - Ladies' Singles - Semi Final - Althea Gibson v Ann Haydon.

"Here stands before you a Negro woman, raised in Harlem, who went on to become a tennis player . . . and finally wind up being a world champion, in fact, the first black woman champion of this world. And believe it or not, I still am."

Gibson was born in August 1927 in Silver, South Carolina, southeast of Columbia. She was three when she moved to Harlem in New York City. She grew up in the city, skipping school, hanging out in pool halls and sneaking drinks of her uncle's whiskey. She used to ride the subway late into the night to avoid going home. Her family life was difficult. Her father beat her, even if, as Gibson said later, she deserved it. "Daddy would whip me," she told ESPN. "I'm not talking about spankings."

Sports became her refuge. Basketball first. Then paddle tennis. She didn't get her first proper tennis racket until she was 13. But once she put the used racket in her hand, something clicked. She learned to play at the Cosmopolitan Tennis Club in Harlem and then quit high school to compete in American Tennis Association (ATA) tournaments. The ATA organized tournaments for black players, who were banned from the United States Lawn Tennis Association's tournaments.

It was at the 1946 ATA finals in Ohio that her life changed forever. Dr. Hubert Eaton of Wilmington, North Carolina, and Dr. Robert Johnson of Lynchburg, Virginia, approached the then-18-year-old Althea Gibson with a deal: Gibson would live with Eaton in Wilmington and attend Williston, and train and travel to tournaments with Johnson in Lynchburg during the summers.

A tennis player in his own right, Eaton won the 1932 N.C. Inter-Scholastic Tennis Tournament in Winston-Salem. He knew talent when he saw it and needed a talent to break down the color barrier like Jackie Robinson did in baseball. Gibson was looked at as the "Great Black Hope" by her fans at the ATA. When Johnson asked her if she was interested in the deal, she volleyed the answer right back. "Who wouldn't be interested in a deal like that?" she said, according to a 1982 feature in *Tennis* magazine.

Eaton was no stranger to the civil rights movement. He was spurred to fight for equality after he realized the court system had separate Bibles to swear in black and white witnesses. His daughter was the plaintiff in the 1964 lawsuit that desegregated schools in New Hanover County. He was also instrumental in desegregating the YMCA, Wilmington College, and the Municipal Golf Course.

But winning on the court wasn't enough. They needed a player with good manners and demeanor so a white player could never impeach her character. Eaton helped Gibson with the social skills needed to face a segregated and often hostile tennis community, Eaton wrote in his memoir, *Every Man Should Try*. Gibson would later credit Eaton with helping her cultivate the grace and dignity she needed on and off the court. "No one would say anything to me because of the way I carried myself," Gibson said. "Tennis was a game for ladies and gentleman, and I conducted myself in that manner."

The partnership worked, and Gibson dominated the ATA, winning 10 straight national championships. But the United States Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA) tournaments were still off limits to black players until Alice Marble, a white tennis player, wrote a scathing critique of the ban in *American Lawn Tennis* magazine:

"If tennis is a game for ladies and gentlemen it's time we acted a little more like gentlepeople and less like sanctimonious hypocrites," she wrote in a 1950 magazine story. Adding: "If Althea Gibson represents a challenge to the present crop of players, then it's only fair that they meet this challenge on the courts."

The magazine story forced the USLTA's hand, and Gibson was admitted into the 1950 U.S. National tournament. She defeated Barbara Knapp in straight sets in her first match and was playing Louise Brough, a three-time Wimbledon champion, when a thunder storm stopped the match tied at one set apiece. During the storm, lightning struck a concrete eagle at the top of the stadium. Gibson took it as a good sign, saying "it may have been an omen that times were changing."

The next day, Brough won three straight games to eliminate Gibson, but she'd competed. There was a crack in the barrier. For the next several years, Gibson worked her way up the ranks as she got familiar with the competition. Six years later, she took the French Open by defeating Angela Mortimer, the defending champion, 6-0, 12-10 but lost in the finals of the U.S. Nationals. It wasn't until she shed the burden of breaking the color barrier that she came into her own as an athlete, she said. "I tried to feel responsibilities to Negroes, but that was a burden on my shoulders," she said in 1957. "Now I'm playing tennis to please me, not them."

1957 was her year.

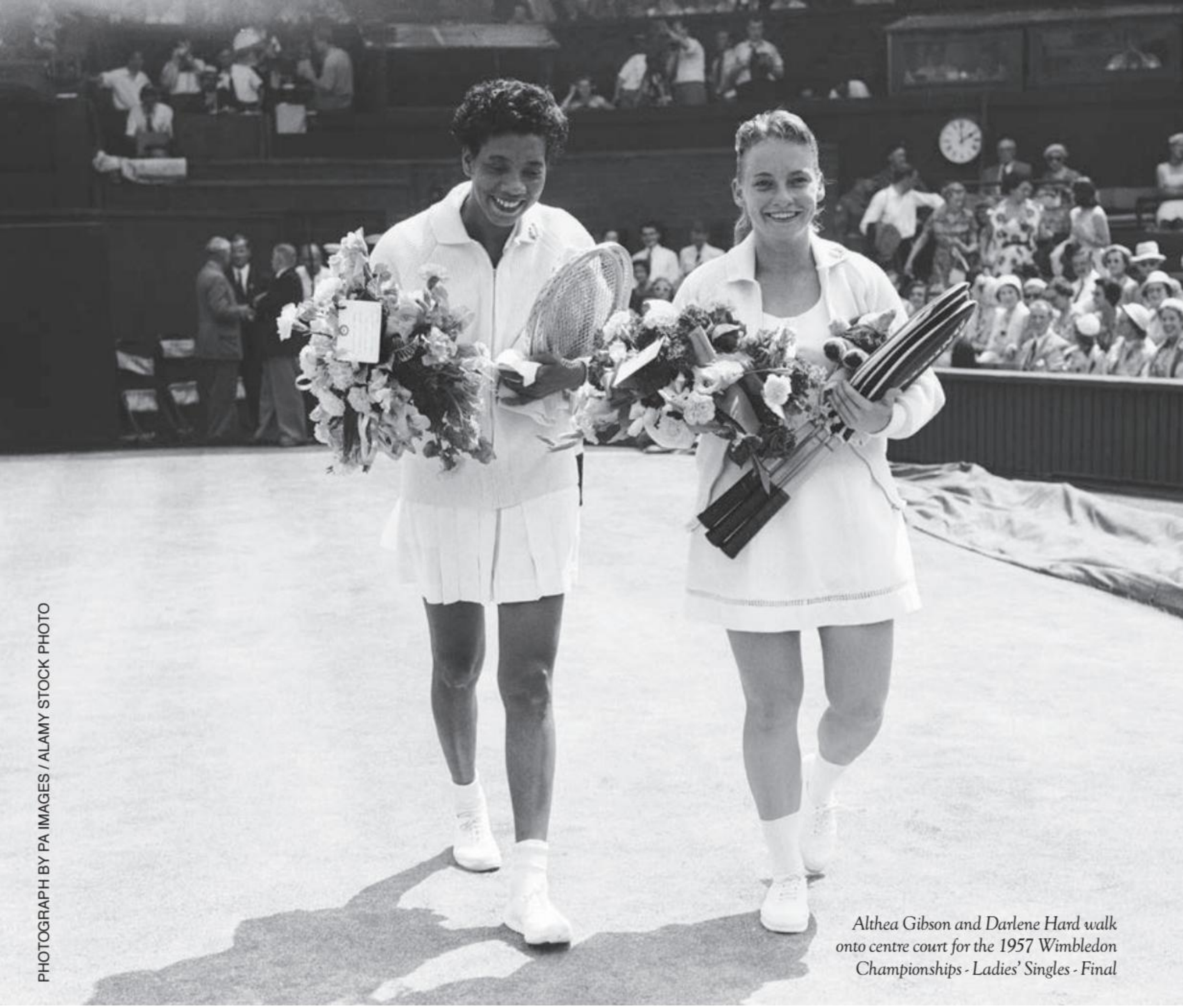
First winning in Wimbledon in July, and then returning to the United States to win the U. S. Nationals in September at Forest Hills. Gibson also won the Wimbledon doubles tournament with Hard at Wimbledon and mixed doubles with Kurt Nielsen at Forest Hills.

The next year, she repeated her performance winning both Wimbledon and the U.S. Nationals and a doubles title at Wimbledon. She retired in 1958. She would rack up an impressive record — 16-1 at Wimbledon and 27-7 at the U.S. Nationals. Her overall record at Grand Slam events was 53-9. After her retirement, Gibson tried professional golf. While not a native, she is beloved in the Port City. In 2000, she was included on the Wilmington Walk of Fame and in 2010, the tennis complex at Empie Park was named in her honor. She also trained in Wilmington, working with Lenny Simpson, who mentored Arthur Ashe. She died in 2003 in New Jersey of respiratory failure after suffering a stroke and heart problems. She was 76.

Tennis may have let her in, but Gibson was still facing a nation that saw African-Americans as second-class citizens. Hotels refused to give her a room — even one hosting an event in her honor. But Gibson resisted calls to join the civil rights movement. "I have never regarded myself as a crusader," she said in her 1958 autobiography, *I Always Wanted to Be Somebody*. "I don't consciously beat the drums for any cause, not even the Negro in the United States."

She may not have consciously been a crusader, but others see her legacy differently. "Her contribution to the civil rights movement was done with her tennis racket," says Fran Gray, cofounder of the Althea Gibson Foundation, which teaches golf and tennis to urban youth.

The New York Times columnist William C. Rhoden argued in a 1977 story Gibson's accomplishments were "revolutionary" for the black community. "Even to those Blacks who hadn't the slightest idea of where or what Wimbledon was, her victory, like Jackie Robinson's in baseball and Jack Johnson's in boxing, proved again that Blacks, when given an opportunity, could compete at any level in American society," he wrote.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Althea Gibson and Darlene Hard walk onto centre court for the 1957 Wimbledon Championships - Ladies' Singles - Final

Katrina Adams, the first African-American chief executive officer and president of the United States Tennis Association, called Gibson the "Jackie Robinson of tennis," and praised her charisma and mental toughness for withstanding the competition on the court and the racism outside the stadium. "When she played at the US Lawn Tennis Association Championships that was a first," she told the UK's *Independent*. "What she did, to go on and win it two times, and to win Wimbledon twice, really opened the door and broke the barrier for people of her color to say: 'Hey, I too can do this if I have an opportunity.'"

It would be a long time before a black woman would rule the tennis world again. But in 1999, Serena Williams won the U.S. Open and Venus Williams won Wimbledon in 2000. The Williams sisters were a call back to Gibson. Athletic and powerful, they were the modern versions of the legend, a fact not lost on the sisters. "I knew she was watching when Serena won the U.S. Open and she's happy to see another black woman win in her lifetime," Venus Williams said after winning Wimbledon. Knowing Gibson's reputation, she would probably rather play Serena or Venus for the title. A match Rex Miller, the producer of a documentary about Gibson, would have liked: "Althea was a serve-and-volleyer; very, very aggressive; big wingspan; built more like Venus than Serena," Miller said in a *New York Times* story. "Give Althea the same equipment, a little more coaching, time to get familiar with the modern game: It would have been a real matchup."

Kevin Maurer is the author of nine books, including No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission That Killed Osama Bin Laden.

The Green Way

Carolina Beach's path to the future

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

If there's a hidden gem in the Cape Fear region, it's Pleasure Island, the tiny barrier island that comprises Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Fort Fisher. Each area is unique, but it is Carolina Beach that sets the pace of life on the island. That's in large part because it is where the vast majority of visitors first arrive, after crossing Snow's Cut Bridge with its wide angle view from the ocean to the river. In the last five years, Carolina Beach has undergone some notable changes: there's a new scenic boardwalk dotted with large porch swings that runs from the Marriott hotel and exits across the street from Nollie's Tacos and a revitalized pedestrian business district awash in retro-1950s charm. Unlike some overdeveloped coastal towns, the beach isn't shaded by a long wall of high-rise hotels and condos. That's because Carolina Beach knows it isn't just a tourist town, it's home to over 6,000 year-round residents. The challenge in such a community, one whose population more than quadruples each summer, is to serve both its visitors and its residents. At times, that can get complicated. Fortunately, the thing that draws families to vacation at Carolina Beach is the same thing that makes most people want to raise their families here — a laid-back coastal town with lots of ways to enjoy the outdoors.

Ethan Crouch moved to Carolina Beach in 2009 and fell in love with island life. He says that the bike and pedestrian capabilities drew him to the town. He and his fiancé Meg find that they have everything they need nearby. "I come over the bridge on Friday, park the car in the driveway, and it often doesn't move until it's time to go back to work in Wilmington on Monday," he says. "We like to bike or walk everywhere: to the beach, restaurants, the hardware store, to see friends. That really sets Carolina Beach apart. It has certainly changed our lives for the better." Sometimes, he admits, connectivity is an issue. Not everyone is comfortable cycling on the busier streets. But Crouch is quick to praise the town's extensive efforts in that direction, and says Carolina Beach's new Island Greenway, a brand new pedestrian and cycling path that affords residents a safer and more pleasant route from Mike Chappell Park to Kure Beach, is "a tremendous leap forward."

This path is part of what many island residents hope will eventually be an outer greenway loop of the entire island, one that will connect Carolina Beach State Park, Mike Chappell Park, the elementary school, the beach and boardwalk, and the town of Kure Beach and run down to the Fort Fisher ferry area. The realization of such a grand vision will require a tremendous spirit of collaboration between municipalities, property owners, the NC Department of Transportation, and the federal government, which owns and controls the use of the land in the "buffer zone" of the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point — one of the largest munitions depots in the world. Unbeknownst to many, Dow Road, Mike Chappell Park, and a town storage facility are also located on this buffer-zone land, used courtesy of the federal government.

Mayor Joe Benson, who served as a colonel in the Air Force, says that he enjoys working with the officials at Sunny Point and that the town currently enjoys one of the strongest relationships it has had in years. He is quick to laud officials at MOTSU for granting permission for the pathway, and to the community members who stepped up to engage in the often-thorny process of collaboration. Benson encourages concerned residents to come to town council meetings to participate in the process. "It's one thing to deliver your opinions over social media, it's quite another thing to show up and participate," he says. It's also a method that yields results. When Carolina Sands residents were concerned about the proximity of the path to the neighborhood, the town invited officials at MOTSU, residents spoke at council meetings and proposed several well-thought-out options. Eventually, the pathway route was altered to run between a lovely wooded area and a large retention pond. MOTSU also requires tall fencing along the path. When residents balked at military-style fencing, more aesthetically pleasing black chain-link fence was installed.

The town also sent out a survey to residents a few months ago asking them about their priorities as the town develops its land use plan. Benson says that "the top-ranking priority residents noted was storm water, understandable with Hurricane Florence fresh in our minds. The second was bike and pedestrian options."

In addition to the Greenway, the town is creating more multi-use paths and sidewalks throughout the town to increase accessibility and reduce overall traffic. Council member LeeAnn Pierce started and serves as the council liaison to the town's bike and pedestrian committee. Pierce points out that she has lived in Carolina Beach for 27 years and that "it has changed dramatically in the last few years. We want to be a bikeable, walkable, accessible community." She says it took about six years to bring the Greenway to fruition. "We got an 80/20 grant to fund the project. That means that 80 percent of the project was funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and 20 percent by the town." Pierce also points out that the town has a master plan for increased connectivity with multi-use paths. We have a multi-use path on Cape Fear Boulevard, we just got grant funding for a multi-use path on Clarendon Boulevard, and we plan to have one on Harper Avenue." The paths will connect visitors to the Island Greenway and the local park.

Fifteen years ago, Carolina Beach was a veritable ghost town in the off-season; now locally owned niche businesses that cater to both residents and tourists — businesses like Shore Break Bikes, Salty Dog Yoga, Island Wellness, the Veggie Wagon, Island Massage, and Pet Bazaar — are thriving year round. In large part, that's due to the island's year-round residents — folks who send their children to the local elementary school and walk their dogs on warm summer evenings, stopping here and there to catch up with neighbors. The Island Greenway allows us to stop and chat in a serene, lovely, and safe environment.

Author and creative writing instructor Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

Elizabeth Hester has a complicated relationship with walls. During her time as a civil engineer she had to learn how to work with them. During her early classical ballet training she was constrained by them. But for the last two decades she has been chipping away at them using a secret weapon: ballet. "For almost 20 years, Wilmington Ballet Company would organize groups to put on productions — all kinds of groups: schools, gymnasts, Special Olympics, Boy Scouts — and we would bring in guest professional artists," Hester noted. It has been a long process, but two years ago it yielded an unexpected reward: a dream realized. "I met Walter and Ines and founded a professional company." That is not a sentence that the little girl who started taking dance at the Community Arts Center in the 1970s ever thought she would say. But Walter Angelini and Ines Albertini moved here to found US International Ballet with Hester and perform as the principal dancers and co-artistic directors.

It isn't just a dream realized — it really is the third jewel in her crown. Hester opened the Wilmington School of Ballet in 1999. This is in addition to the non-profit Wilmington Ballet Company that puts on community ballet productions. "The ballet company had a mission of bringing our community together, which at that time was not

New Jewel in the Crown

The Wilmington Ballet Company joins forces with US International Ballet to elevate classical dance in the Port City

By Gwenyfar Rohler · Photographs By Mark Steelman

heavily arts [oriented], particularly ballet," Hester recalled. For many people those two accomplishments would have been sufficient. To have started with dance in Wilmington before there was even a dedicated ballet studio, then attended NC School of the Arts and danced professionally would have been a dream realized for many young women. To return home and open a successful ballet school would have been more than many would hope for. But Hester is a woman of infinite possibility, boundless depth and incredible capability. Or perhaps we should just call her a Renaissance woman. After all, on top of her successful dance career, she has an engineering degree from NC State. But still, she dreamed.

"I put one ad in an international magazine because I had this dream and I wanted to see if I could make it work," Hester explained. "My dream was to create a [professional] ballet company where old rules didn't apply. The box of it has to look 'this way' didn't apply — and in a couple of really specific ways. One was I really do believe that ballet has to innovate in a way that entertains the *So You Think You Can Dance* audience, or it is going to die." Hester noted that the rigor and beauty of classical ballet can remain the structure to support a more awe-inspiring spectacle, but that some sort of openness to fusion and growth was key for her: "I also believe deeply that ballet has a lot of dysfunction in saying only one kind of body type can dance."

Vampires

Enter Angelini and Albertini. "They kept sending me information and honestly I thought, 'These people don't understand Wilmington.'" Hester read their resumes and couldn't believe they would leave the markets they had worked in to come here. But Angelini and Albertini were sold after one visit with Hester. "I saw [them] as a way out of my realm. [They] actually did see eye to eye and they made a trip to meet me — and the more we talked, the more our visions were similar . . . honestly, I think that our background being so different, but our values being the same, is what makes it so strong."

Angelini and Albertini have embraced their time here, including using the opportunity to develop new ballets such as last year's sold out *Vampires* at Thalian Hall. For this season they have expanded it to a two-act, full-length ballet, which will return to Thalian Hall in the fall. In addition, this summer they will bring *Midsummer Night's Dream* to the Wilson Center and at the holidays the much- beloved *Nutcracker*, which will also include dancers from the Wilmington Ballet Company. "They are two separate entities, they work together and they have an ongoing professional contracted relationship, and they benefit one another," Hester says, explaining the relationship between the professional company, US International Ballet, and the Wilmington Ballet Company.

"The basis is ballet," Angelini acknowledged when asked about their creative work. "But we train in contemporary, modern and other styles. We bring a lot of different other styles together."

"And character work!" Albertini added. "All kinds of character work."

"We have 30 professional dancers from everywhere," Angelini noted. In addition to trainee dancers, there are ten paid dancers. "We audition all around the world. We are in the process to offer student visas."

All that is part of the behind-the-scenes heavy lifting. What the audience sees — like their original ballet *Vampires*, not only has more sizzle but is harder to box as classical ballet. "They do for ballet what Cirque du Soleil did for acrobatics. They take ballet and make it awe-inspiring and appealing to the average person." Hester shook her head and grinned. "Things that even my husband, who was a factory worker and runs the UPS store, says, 'I would buy a ticket to that.' I like to say they're going to bring ballet into the 21st century."

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore, Old Books on Front Street, in downtown Wilmington.

GALLERY

By the Light of a BLUE MOON

We at Salt *love nothing better than great local art. At Eclipse Artisan Boutique, we recently found a bounty of beautiful things – something for every taste*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

Shayne Greco Ceramic lobster platter

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Melanie Heinrich
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Mike Demonte *Le Soleil Royale* 1669 — Wooden ship model

"At the age of 14, I went to work on the fishing boats in Italy, where I was born in 1949. I always wanted to be at sea. I wanted to be the captain of a ship. Since I emigrated to the United States (at the urging of my parents) in 1969, I had to forgo my dreams…If I could not become captain of a ship, I would build one. I have always liked ancient galleon ships, thus my interest in building them."

Doug Campbell

Circles of Life —
Stainless-steel sculpture

Arthur Ard

Four cage hanging chandelier

Cathy Johnson *Moorish Idol*
Carved fish sculpture made of tupelo wood

"I have always been intrigued with wildlife and nature. My approach to wood sculpting is to recreate the image as accurately and in the greatest detail as I possibly can. I especially pay attention to texture and color. Without these you can't get a true likeness of the real subject. I start each new piece with an idea and a blank chunk of tupelo or walnut wood, which I carve using my power tools. No two pieces of wood are alike, so no sculptures ever turn out identical."

Rosie and Dave Burr
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waves
ISLAND LIFE

STORY OF A HOUSE

A New Life in Forest Hills

Hard-working renovators Lindsey and Grayson Cheek bring a stately Colonial back to life

By William Irvine · Photography By Millie Holloman

The Mason house is a familiar destination on one of the most majestic oak-lined streets of Forest Hills. The Mason family lived here for 60 years until 2014, when Dr. Mason died in his 90s and bequeathed it to his four grown children, none of whom was interested in living there. But the stately Colonial was not an easy sell at all — it needed a lot of work. In fact, the interiors had remained essentially untouched since the year the house was built. (And that year would be . . . 1928.) There were early prospects who wanted a teardown, but the children had hoped to hold out for a buyer who wanted to preserve it.

Enter Lindsey and Grayson Cheek, a young couple with a vision and the skills to take on an ambitious renovation. Grayson, an attorney, was sold on the Mason house from the start. "I was having a love affair with the house, but Lindsey wasn't," he says. Lindsey, an interior designer and the owner of Gathered, an elegant housewares boutique, had serious reservations. "I was very reluctant," Lindsey says with a laugh. She initially walked through the house with an architect friend, stressing that she wanted to be responsible and restore the house, but did not have a huge budget to do so. There were enclosed radiators. Lots of peeling wallpaper. Lots of work. Lindsey's own aesthetic is more midcentury modern, but she immediately understood that the house had good bones.

The Cheeks bought the house in January 2016 and undertook a six-month renovation. The couple is always game for a new project — they have been in Wilmington for 11 years and this is their eighth home — so they remained undaunted. And so when they were rooting around the empty kitchen cabinets and discovered the single remaining coffee mug, which read: BUDGETS ARE NOT FOR WIMPS, it seemed to foreshadow the days ahead. "It was an omen," says Grayson with a chuckle.

The Cheeks were able to save a lot on construction costs, because Grayson is very handy. He took out all the radiators and demolished the plasterwork, which in many places was replaced with Sheetrock. He used to come directly from court in a suit and join the demolition crew. "The labor costs went down but the dry cleaning bills went up," he observes. A refrigerator filled with beer was used as an enticement for those workers who stayed past quitting time at 4:00, when they could not only get a cold drink but also some free legal advice.

Upon entering the house, the first floor was formerly very boxy, with small living and dining rooms off an entrance hall. Lindsey opened up the rooms, creating one big living space and a modern, updated kitchen to replace the existing (tiny) one. "It was a maid's kitchen, not really suitable for today. And it had green marbleized linoleum floors. I almost cried," she says. The former living room and sunroom were transformed into a spacious master bedroom suite, with a large tiled bathroom and walk-in shower.

Moving upstairs, Lindsey installed a large round window in the stair hall, which added light and a beautiful view of a gigantic laurel oak in the backyard, and created a picture wall with a mix of family photographs and children's artwork. (The couple have two

VALLETTA
LAND SHARK
BROBOT BEDTIME
1

children, daughter Tilley-Gray, age 7, and son Maines, age 4.) The children's bedrooms are connected by a Jack and Jill bathroom: Tilley-Gray's pink room features an exuberant floral headboard, a pink-and-white-striped rug and an ingenious metal chandelier of flowers. Maines' bedroom might win the award for the most sophisticated bedroom I have ever seen for a 4-year-old, with a white Eames chair and ottoman, vintage life preserver and a ship's lamp. Also on the floor is a guest room with a daybed, used by Lindsey's mother when she comes to town.

The third floor contains a future children's playroom, which is Grayson's project — he did the demolition and although still a work-in-progress, features wood-paneled walls throughout and is tall enough for grown-ups to stand up in.

"This is why we bought the house," Lindsey says as we look out the back window to the spacious yard, a double lot with a swimming pool, whose focal point is the gigantic laurel oak tree, with branches that spread over the entire width of the property. "When we moved in, the backyard was all bricks," she says. "It took nine dump trucks to remove them all." A wooden deck runs the length of the back of the house with an outdoor kitchen, barbecue, and an outdoor shower for après pool or beach (Grayson is an avid surfer). "You can see why we spend about six months a year outside," says Lindsey.

And the Cheeks are deservedly house-proud: their restoration received an award from the Historic Wilmington Foundation. "We were so excited to receive the award. We had no idea that one of our neighbors had nominated us," Lindsey says. One day, all of the Mason children came for a walk-through of the completed house, and were clearly awed at the changes. "One of the daughters turned to me and said, 'Mama and Daddy would be so proud,'" says Lindsey. "That has really meant a lot to me — I feel like we have a special relationship with this house, and I realized that we have become part of its history."

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt.

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ALMANAC

May

By Ash Alder

The soft thud of a magnolia blossom crashing down upon the tender earth takes me back . . .

Rope hammock swing.

Soft light filtering through smooth green leaves.

Love notes tied with twine to sweeping branches.

We both knew it would not last. And yet we had our glorious season.

Life is like that. Fleeting as a fragrant white flower. And as May blossoms burst forth in jubilant splendor, we cherish the transient, intoxicating beauty of spring, and relearn the sacred dance of loving and letting go.

May is the beginning and the end.

On the bookshelf, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* hasn't been opened since the crash-landing of yet another bygone romance that died on Easter weekend, years ago now.

January, February, March, April.

Four cozy months of essays read aloud in bed, yet if we took any morsel of wisdom from Leopold's poetic reflections of the natural world, it was this: Life is an endless dance of change.

This morning, I take the book to the front porch, turning to the dog-eared page of May — a fresh new chapter.

As a black-capped chickadee draws quick sips from the nearby birdbath, I read about the return of the upland plover, what Leopold refers to as the "final proof of spring" in rural Wisconsin.

Here, the final proof of spring is gone. We have landed on the fresh new chapter of May, a glorious season of its own.

Children are the anchors that hold a mother to life. — Sophocles

Cinco de Mayo

Mark your calendar. The Eta Aquarid Shower peaks just before dawn on Sunday, May 5. You could witness 10—40 meteors per hour. Not exactly the return of Halley's comet, but it's a chance to catch a glimpse of the famous comet's debris. Find yourself a soft spot on the lawn. Breathe in the aroma of Southern magnolia. Enjoy the show.

The Mother's Moon

The Full Flower Moon rises on Saturday, May 18. Also called Mother's Moon, Milk Moon and Corn Planting Moon, this month's moon illuminates red fox pups, fluffy cygnets, and wildflowers everywhere.

Speaking of lunar magic, *The Old Farmer's Almanac* looks at the positions and phases of the moon to determine the "best days" for various activities. This month, the best days for planting aboveground crops are May 8 and 9 (plan now for July sweet corn on the grill). Plant belowground crops May 26.

Cut hay May 1–3.

Prune May 10–11 to encourage new growth.

Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut on May 26.

'Tis like the birthday of the world,
When earth was born in bloom;
The light is made of many dyes,
The air is all perfume;
There's crimson buds, and white and blue,
The very rainbow showers
Have turned to blossoms where they fell,
And sown the earth with flowers.

— Thomas Hood

Gifts for Mama

Mother's Day falls on Sunday, May 12. I think of my fourth-grade teacher, who asked us to bring in one of our mother's high heels. Yes, just one. We spray-painted it gold, lined the inside with floral foam, and proudly stuck a dozen plastic flowers inside. Happy Mother's Day to all. May you walk in beauty.

Here are a few seeds of inspiration for the beloved mother figure in your life:

- Daylily bulbs
- Mexican tarragon for the herb garden
- Azaleas
- Ornamental pepper
- Wax begonia
- A new pair of shiny gold shoes

Arts Calendar

3rd Annual Bluegrass Bash

5/3

Design NC Forum

5/17

9th Annual Raise the Roof Auction and Gala

5/31

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

5/1 Minnie, Clyde, Annie, Vollis: Outsider Art

Rebels: An exhibition of works by outsider artists Minnie Evans, Clyde Jones, Annie Hooper, and Vollis Simpson — Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: cameronartmuseum.org.

5/1 Communities in Schools Fashion Show

11 a.m. This organization raises funds to support at-risk students in New Hanover and Pender counties. In addition to a runway show of summer styles, there will be a mimosa bar and silent auction. Admission: $65. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. For info: countrycluboflandfall.com.

5/2-6 Othello

7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m.This multimedia production of Shakespeare is set in the present day. Stein Theatre at Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

5/3 3rd Annual Bluegrass Bash

7:30 p.m. The 3rd Annual Bluegrass Bash is an outdoor event featuring local musicians, craft beer, and food trucks. Admission: $15 -$25. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

5/3-4 Carolina Strawberry Festival

Friday, 6-11 p.m.; Saturday, 10a.m.-11 p.m. The Carolina Strawberry Festival features an abundance of succulent berries, as well as a car show, carnival rides, live music, cornhole, and a Daredevil Dog Show. Admission: Free. 100 NW Railroad Street, Wallace. Info: (910) 447-9925 or carolinastrawberryfestival.com.

5/4 Wilmington Symphony Orchestra

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra concert is entitled "Russian Classics," and includes Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, among other works. Tickets: $17-$47. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

5/4 30th Annual River to Sea Bike Ride

7 a.m. - 10 a.m. The 30th Annual River to Sea Bike Ride runs from downtown along the historic route of the Wilmington Sea Coast Railroad. All age groups and experience levels welcome. Helmets required. Admission: Free. Market and Front Streets, Wilmington. Info and registration: wmpo.org/bike-month.

5/4 Kentucky Derby Party With Brews, Bourbon and BBQ

3 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Kentucky Derby Party at Poplar Grove Plantation features live music from the Folkestone Stringband and a live viewing of the Kentucky Derby. There is beer, wine, and bourbon for purchase and barbecue food trucks. Admission: Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. For info: poplargrove.org.

5/4-5 20th Annual Festival Latino

11 a.m. The 20th Annual Festival Latino will include authentic foods from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Columbia and Venezuela as well as pinatas, clowns, and a salsa contest. Admission: Free. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. For info: amigosinternatiacional.org.

5/5 North Carolina Symphony Concert

7:30 p.m. The North Carolina Symphony performs a varied program that includes *Carmina Burana* and *Prince of Clouds* by Anna Clyne. Admission: $16-$77. The Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

5/5-6 16th Annual Golf Tournament, Games Day

The 16th Annual Golf Tournament, Games Day, Dinner & Auction to benefit the Good Shepherd Center will take place at the Country Club of Landfall. Sunday features a Cinco de Mayo dinner and auction; Monday is the gold tournament and games day. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. For more info and tickets: goodshepherdwilmington.ejoinme.org/landfall-golf-games.

5/7 34th Annual Women of Achievement Awards

This annual fundraiser for the YWCA Lower Cape Fear honors women and student leaders in the community. Proceeds benefit the YWCA's programs and services. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For info: ywca-lowercapefear.org/WOA.

5/10 An Evening With Union Duke

7:30 p.m. Thalian Hall presents an evening with Canadian folk quintet Union Duke. Admission: $15-$50. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

5/11 4th Annual Marina Day

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The 4th Annual Marina Day will feature a display of classic boats, vessel safety demonstrations, kayaks and paddleboards. Food trucks will be on-site for lunch. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Rd., Carolina Beach. For info: (910) 458-8206.

5/11 17th Annual Full Belly Feast Gala

7-10 p.m. The 17th Annual Full Belly Feast Gala will feature a silent auction and dinner provided by Pine Valley Market. Admission: $75. The Terraces on Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. For info: thefullbellyproject.org/feast2019.

5/11-12 Something Rotten

The Broadway hit *Something Rotten*, which features the travails of the brothers Nick and Nigel Bottom in their attempt to outperform rival William Shakespeare, comes for two nights to the Wilson Center. Admission: $42-$95. The Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage/something-rotten.

5/14 The Struts in Concert

6:30 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. Admission: $23-$28. Kids under 11 are free. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. For info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/events/2019/the-struts.

5/16 11th Annual Wilma Dash

6:30 p.m. The 11th Annual Wilma Dash takes place this evening in downtown Wilmington. 5K run/walk and Health Fest afterparty with fitness assessments. Admission: $25-$50. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. Info: events@wilmingtonbiz.com.

5/17 Wilmington Choral Society Concert

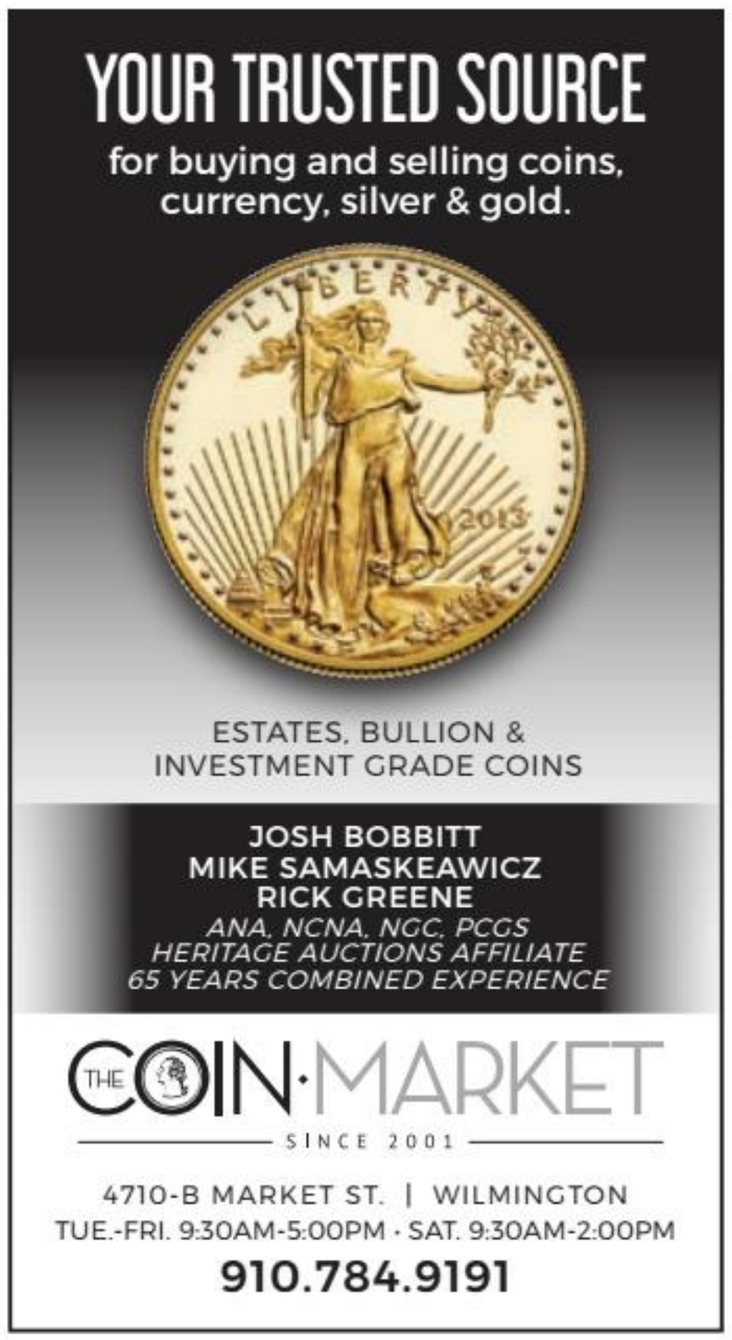
7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Choral Society's Concert, Mass Appeal, comes to the Wilson Center with a program featuring Franz Schubert's *Mass in G* and *A Little Jazz Mass* composed by Bob Chilcott. Admission: $16-$20. The Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonchoralsociety.com.

5/17 Design NC Forum

10 a.m. Design NC presents "The Language of Design: Inside and Out," a daylong forum and luncheon featuring talks by New York interior designer Alexa Hampton and Greensboro landscape architect Chip Callaway. Interior designer Marshall Watson serves as moderator. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. For info: designNC.org.

5/17-19 27th Annual Greek Festival

11 a.m - 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Wilmington hosts their 27th Annual Greek Festival this weekend, with food, cooking demonstrations, music, and dancing. Admission: $3. St. Nicholas



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Greek Orthodox church, 608 South College Road, Wilmington. For info: stnicholasgreekfest.com/schedule.html.

5/17-18 The Big What Wilmington

Friday, 6 p.m.; Saturday 4:30 p.m. The Big What Wilmington is a two-night lineup of live music, including Signal Fire, Big Something with DJ Logic, and Dr. Bacon. Admission: $25-$40. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. For info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

5/18 Ability Garden Plant Sale

9 a.m. - 12 p.m. The Ability Garden Plant Sale features thousands of house plants, herbs, succulents, and native plants for purchase. Admission: Free. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: abilitygarden.org.

5/18 15th Annual Rims on the River Car Show

11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Classic cars on show all day. Admission: Free. Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (216) 374-8884 or rimsontheriver.com.

5/17-19 Wilmington Wine and Food Festival

Friday, 7-9:30 p.m.; Saturday, 2-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m. A weekend-long celebration with wine and food pairings featuring local chefs. Friday is a Southern Smoke BBQ cocktail party; Saturday is Corks & Forks Grand Tasting; Sunday is Bubbles, Brews and Street Eats. Admission: $5-$70; individual event prices vary. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. For info: wilmingtonwineandfood.com.

5/21-22 Kinky Boots

7:30 p.m. Broadway hit Kinky Boots comes to the Wilson Center for a two-night engagement. Music by Cyndi Lauper. Admission: $46-$96. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu/capefearstage/kinky_boots.

5/23 Mojo and the Bayou Gypsies

7:30 p.m. Thalian Hall presents Mojo and the Bayou Gypsies, a six-person ensemble who mix Cajun accordion, fiddle, drums and more for a unique sound. Admission: $15-$50. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

5/22-26 How I Learned What I Learned

8 p.m.; Sunday 3 p.m. Big Dawg Productions presents August Wilson's one-man play, How I Learned What I Learned. Admission: $18-$25. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle St., Wilmington. For info: bigdawgproductions.org.

5/31 9th Annual Raise the Roof Auction and Gala

7 p.m. This year's gala, Anchors Away Soiree, features live and silent auctions, coastal-themed cuisine, and dancing to Port City Shakedown. Proceeds benefit Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministries. Admission: $100. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 N. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. For info: warmraisetheroof.org.

5/31-6/1 Back to the Beach Car & Truck Show

4 p.m. Friday; Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Back to the Beach Car & Truck Show starts Friday afternoon with a Cruise In and on Saturday features vendors and food trucks. Admission: Free. Fort Fisher Air Force Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach For info: (910) 616-7104 or suncoastcruisers.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday

Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

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Tuesday

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert, or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmer's Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey, and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterwards. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Dr., Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wbbeer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday and Saturday

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday

Carolina Beach Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

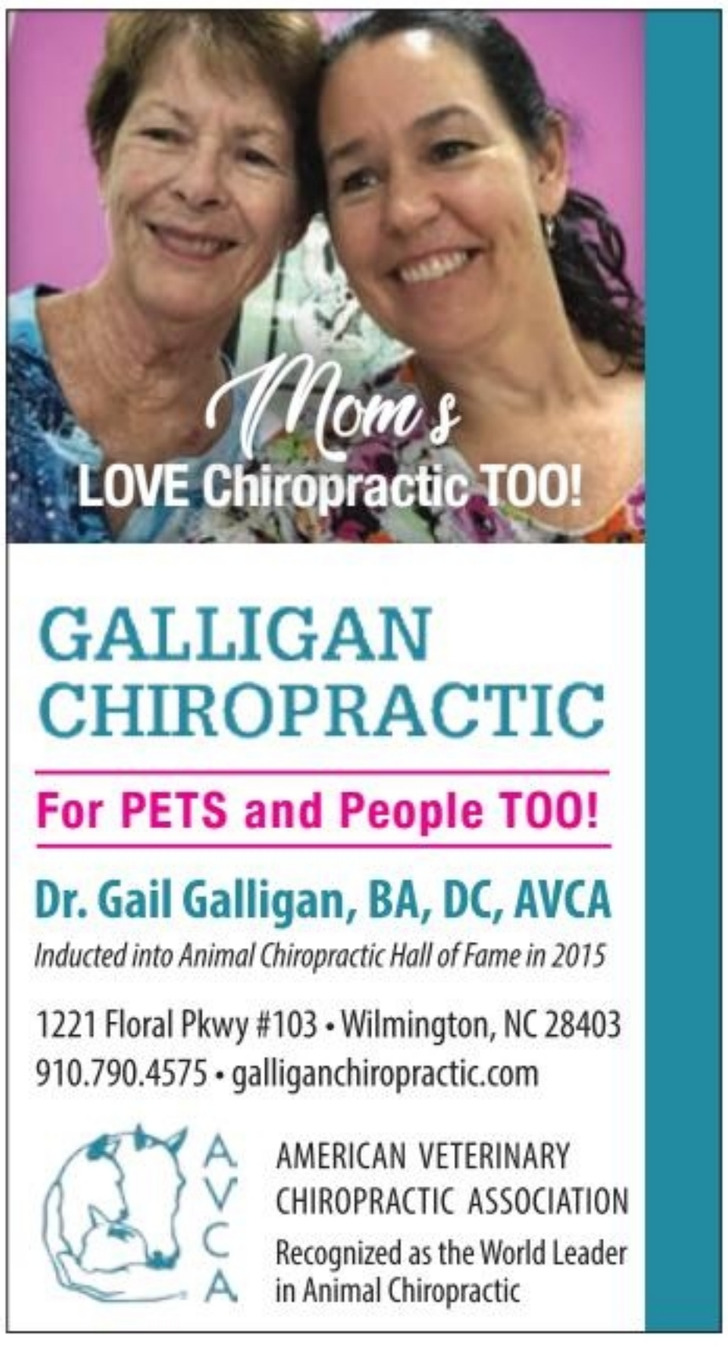
8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from the farm. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., & 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/.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Port City People

Azalea Festival Queen's Coronation

Greenfield Lake Amphitheater

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Peyton Hedge, Jonathan Hedge, Briana Venskus, Steffanie B. Easter

Dorian McCorey, Isaiah Parker, Caroline Haller, Ben Dudek, Deja Grant, Corbin Stynes, Martina Marler, Charles Pitchford

Tamera Young, Grace Boyles

Laura Matrazzo

Liza Dougherty, Steffanie B. Easter, Sean Bakey

Ella Rogers, Jessica Hoadley, Claire Emma Britt, Elissa Hall, Shoshannah Stowe

Jeff Phillips

Amani Ricks, Grace Boyles

Wendy Criner, Mimi Faust

Alison English, Denise Szaloky

Port City People

Azalea Festival Parade & Street Fair

Downtown Wilmington

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Jonathan, Jennifer, Wyatt, Peyton & Garrett Hedge

Schyler Conaway, Karley Willocks, Amanda Downey, Courtney Brady

Anne Claire Nunalee, Kathryn Schosek, Madison Johnson

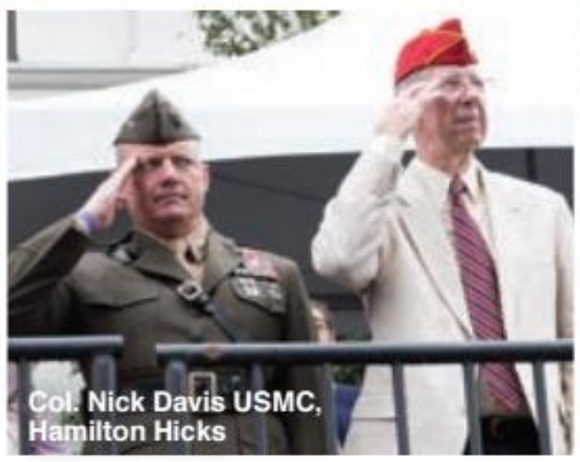
Miss North Carolina, Laura Matrazzo

Bergen DeLeeuw

Andrew Nettleman, Denise Szaloky, John E. Russ III, Deidre McGlone-Webb, Dr. Stephen Meinhold, Jonathan D. Hedge

Tamera Young

Miss Riverfest, Jacquelyn Brinson


Col. Nick Davis USMC, Hamilton Hicks

2019 Azalea Festival Queen, Briana Venskus

Port City People

Paws on Parade

Official "Dog Party" of the Azalea Festival

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Maya Campbell, Avery Pickett, Shoshana Stowe

Lauren Rodgers, "Finley"
Sal Serpe,"Kawa"

Will Wright, "Sugar"

Laura Johnson, "Lane"
Sophia Peterson, "Pawley"

Emma Overton, "Dune"
Ashlie Sutton, "Silas"

TK & Kimber Nowell, "Boulder"

Marc Dunshe, "Riley"

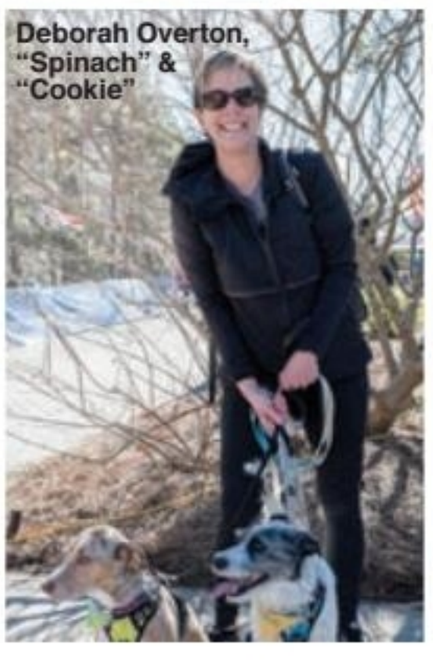
Ella Gagnon, "Fifi"

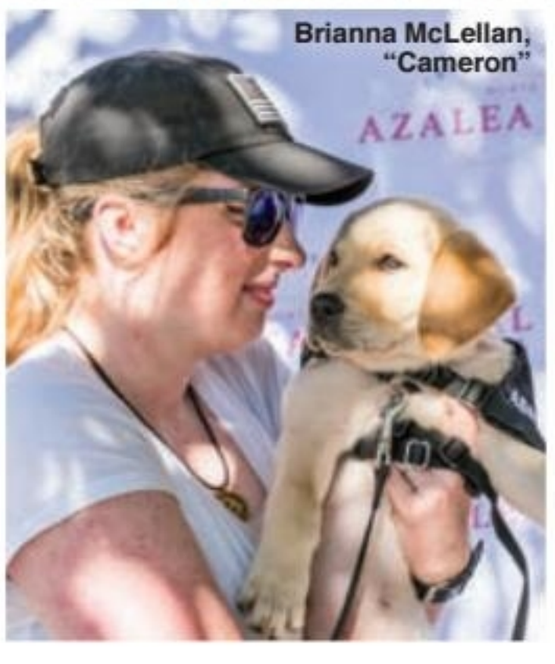
Sue Moga, Doug Rodgers, "Stella" & "Horton"

Kiersten Wilderboer, "Dixie"

Becky Smith, "Duke"

Mary Wilson, "Bowser" & "Roxie"

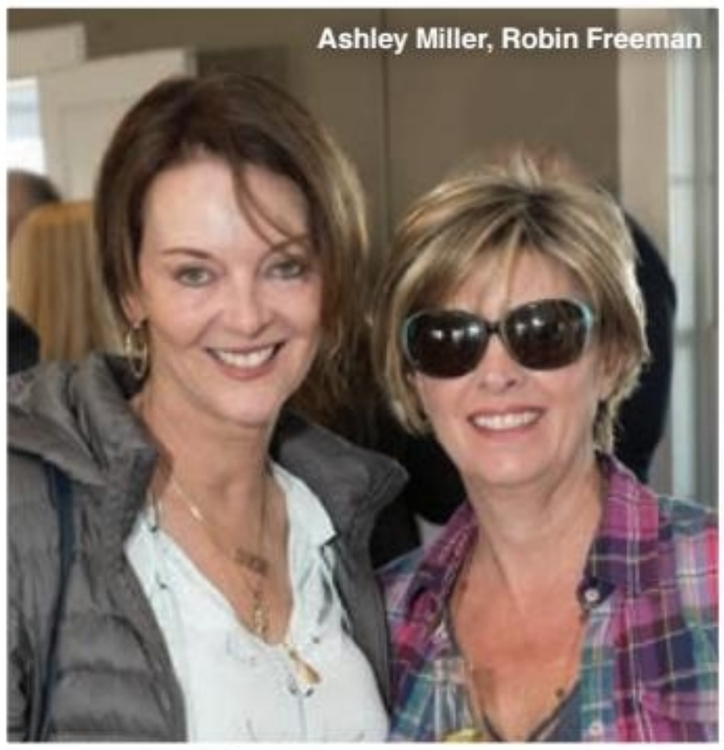

Deborah Overton, "Spinach" & "Cookie"


Brianna McLellan, "Cameron"

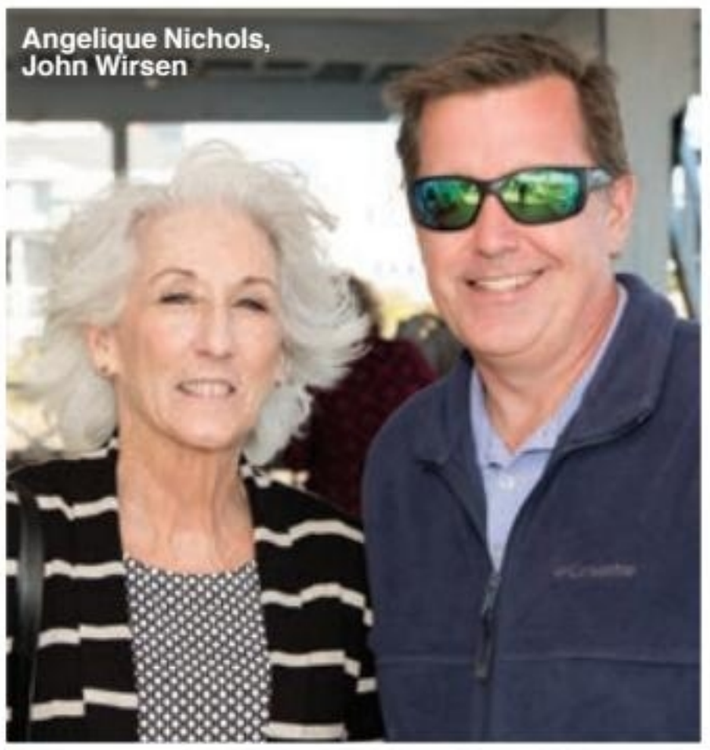
Port City People

Oyster Roast & Southern Coastal Feast

Benefit for the Wrightsville Beach Museum
Hosted by Intracoastal Realty
Saturday, March 23, 2019
Photographs by Bill Ritenour


Ashley Miller, Robin Freeman

John & Lauren Gardner, Allie Rawl, Sandy Thorpe


Angelique Nichols, John Wirsen

Joe & Zeke Partin

Melisa Gallison, Irene Hathaway, Colleen Britton, Dana Fisher

Beth Foster, Susie Berndt

Vance Matthews, Lynette Matthews-Murphy, Porter Young

Dickson & Dorothy Bridger, Kathy & Jim Busby

Arch & Hae Ellis, Rich & Monica Williams

Anne Allen, Sharon Laney, Melinda Walker, Susan Snider, Lisa Weeks

Regina Fisher, Alicia Accardo, Tanina Richardson, Lynne Trotta, Kristi Ellison

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Wilmington, NC

The Last Suit	April 28th at 3 PM
Hill Street	April 29th at 7 PM
Numbered	May 1st at 7 PM
Heading Home:	
Tale of Team Israel	May 5th at 2 PM
Golda's Balcony	May 5th at 7 PM
Promise at Dawn	May 6th at 7 PM
93 Queen	May 8th at 7 PM

To purchase tickets or for more information, visit wilmingtonjff.org

The Wilmington Jewish Film Festival is sponsored in part by the United Jewish Appeal of Wilmington, the City of Wilmington, the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and Arts Friendly.

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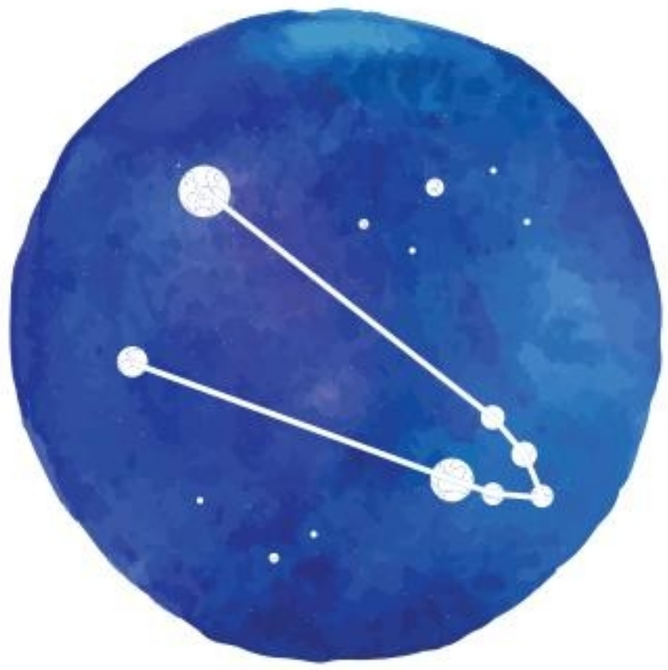
Stardust Memories

Forget the Vegas floor show and look to the skies for a spectacle you'll never forget

By Astrid Stellanova



If you're a fan of the fantastic, find a good spot for sky-watching around May 4–6 when the Eta Aquarids put on a show that will rival the Bellagio's dancing fountains to dazzle us. This is one of the year's best meteor showers. A waxing moon will mean low illumination, offering a good gander at falling stars galore.

Star Gazers, try not to fall off your fishing stool when shooting stars reflect off the pond and fish jump right outta the water. If ya'll should miss out, pass out or fall out, you get a second chance for gawking at something be-yoo-teefull next month when the Arietids occur on June 7.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
There's you, bullish and charged up, and then there's everybody else in the room fighting for the leftover oxygen. You have big appetites, needs and dreams. If you weren't so dadgum full of life force, it would be tempting to just lure your wild self into a padded room, lock the door and keep walking. But who can walk away? Boring you ain't. Amazing you are, when you harness all that star power for the good. If you don't find the discipline, you exhaust friends and confound enemies.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
You can't motivate some people, even if you gave them a job in a MoonPie factory licking marshmallow crème off spoons. Motivating somebody else in your life just ain't your job, Sugar, but motivating yourself, is.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Third time's the charm, and, Honey, you can bet your stars and garters you are gonna succeed. If you can tap, yodel or clog, or have a dog who can, get yourself to Nashville. The stars are in your favor.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
The enemy of your enemy ain't necessarily your friend, Honey Child. You trusted a conniving devil, and you found out you don't like sharing the same lumpy bed, do you? Kick 'em out and put 'em in your past.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Your secret desire may be to play Cher in a tribute band. Whether that happens or not, you will at least be able to find both an open mic and the courage to read that poem you wrote. Sometimes you gotta be you.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Don't just use your head as a hat rack. Modesty ain't working right now. Put your good brain to use, Honey, and notice how opportunity is right smack dab in front of you. It's your turn to show 'em what you got!

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You've been so dang disconnected you don't even know when to shout Bingo. Speak up, Sugar! Everything is pointing to the fact that you need to act. If you do, you avert a big old problem, and if you don't, you won't.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
You got an epic surprise. Someone shocked you silly and sucked the sugar right out of your cheeks. In this case, it is plain wonderful to be wrong. You counted this someone out, but found they counted for something.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Your mouth was wide as Texas but nothing came out. Stage fright, Sugar? Looks like it. Practice speaking up to somebody who gets your goat until the words comes naturally. Meantime, get yourself a good calming mantra.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
You buttered their butt and tore it up like a stale biscuit. Feel better? Vengeance was yours, and now you can mark that fool off the list. Focus on your better angels, not the avenging ones.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Sugar, you love who you love, and you just despise everybody else. Except, you don't exactly say that. In the interest of world peace, end a grudge you've been nursing since fifth grade. Have some gumption.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Lordamercy, watching Aries Star Children gets my eyebrows raised up so high my hairline has to beg for space. Let up on the ambition, and pick up on downshifting. You ain't got to be first all the dang time.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Only in the South

When layaway simply won't do

By Susan S. Kelly

Admit it: There are scenes and situations that could only happen in the South. I'm not talking about moonshine, magnolias, accents or tobacco. Collards, however, are involved.

Exhibit A:

One bitter-cold, sleeting January, my mother was hosting her luncheon bridge club gathering at her house (it's worth noting, and also probably apropos to Only in the South, that my mother had lived in a different town for 18 years, and her bridge club had never replaced her; they'd used substitutes. For *18 years*).

Never mind that these were the '70s, they were still — again, Only in the South — the days of linen tablecloths, sterling silver, crystal goblets, and what I term girl food: lemon bars, asparagus spears, and a chicken casserole concocted with Campbell's mushroom soup. Somewhere between the shuffling and the cleaning, the disposal backed up, the dishwasher broke down, and water from ice-damming in the gutters began running down the walls. The luncheon was not a success.

The minute the last guest left, my mother drove straight to Montaldo's and bought herself a mink coat. (Also worth noting: All through my childhood, when I watched game shows on TV, and fur coats were the ultimate prize, my mother was very firm in her belief that no one under 50 should own a fur coat. She'd reached the required age, but only just.) However, she had to put the mink coat on layaway. That night, she told her mother, my grandmother, who lived in the ultra-sophisticated burg of Walnut Cove in Stokes County, what her day had been like.

The next morning, my grandmother drove straight to Montaldo's, bought the mink coat herself, and delivered it to my mother. Not so much because she felt sorry for my mother — which she no doubt did — but because there was just *no way* that a daughter of hers was going to have anything *on layaway* at Montaldo's.

Exhibit B:

A friend of my mother's — we'll call her Joan — was having a meeting at her house, necessitating finery, flowers, decorum, and girl food (see above). Minutes before the meeting, Joan smelled something awful. The maid had elected that particular morning to cook up a mess of collards (not girl food).

Joan panicked. "You can't cook collards now, Myrna!" she scolded, revolted by the stench, and that a dozen *grande dames* were about to descend into her stinking living room. (Did I mention the meeting involved debutantes? Also Only in the South.) "You've got to get rid of those collards!" So, Myrna did what she was told. She took the big pot of greens off the stove and emptied the whole malodorous mess down the toilet. Which promptly stopped up and overflowed. And no embroidered hand towels in a powder room, or asparagus spears with hollandaise, can overcome a clogged commode, collards, and matrons clad in ultrasuede.

Exhibit C:

My friend Betty grew up with an irascible, alcoholic mother. A real character, who I loved, but was, nevertheless, a drunk. Years later, at a party, Betty was talking to a friend who was married to another adult child of an alcoholic, in a family that might have had even more dysfunction and irregularities than Betty's. Still, the son — we'll call him James — had survived and thrived. Thinking she was delivering a compliment, Betty said, "Look at James. He's successful. Normal. Happy. With all that was going on in his house, how in the world did he turn out so well?"

The friend didn't miss a beat. "Just like you did, Betty. Good help."

Debutantes, collards, Montaldo's, and good help. Only in the South.

Susan S. Kelly is a blithe spirit, author of several novels, and a proud grandmother.

ILLUSTRATION BY MERIDITH MARTENS

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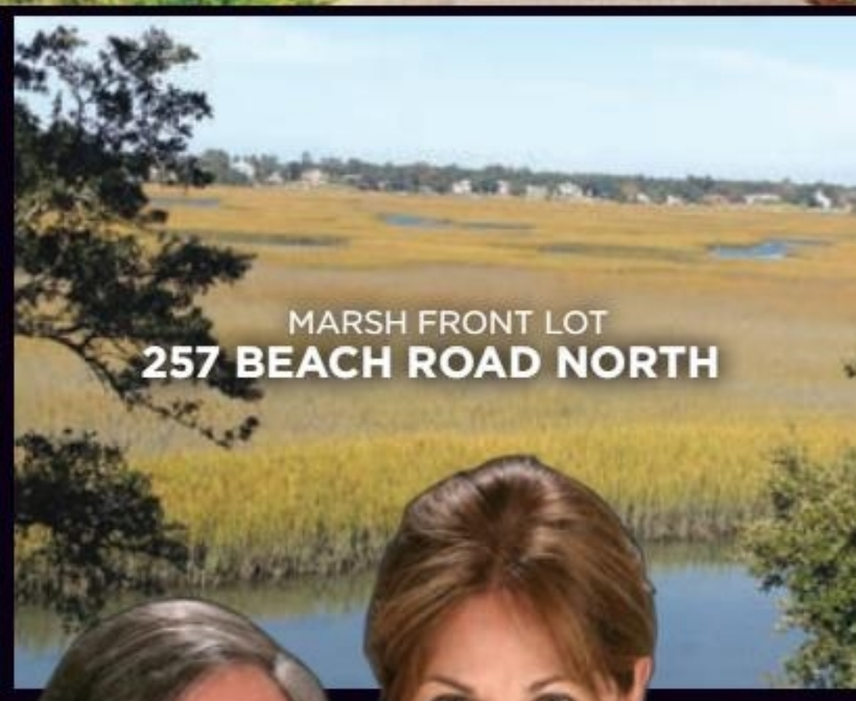

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